

Upon arriving in their destination country - a foreign land, unfamiliar with the culture, language and norms - how do they find a piece of that home they had to leave behind?

Aboessas belongings:

Pictured above is what a real person - Aboessa - 20 years old - from Syria bought with her. Notice anything? For me, i notice the distinct lack of personal items, its strictly practical. It's what may keep her alive or how she may feed her children. In fact, there is a total of 22 items here and the clothes over her and her families shoulders.

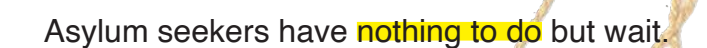
**Thats**

£7.02

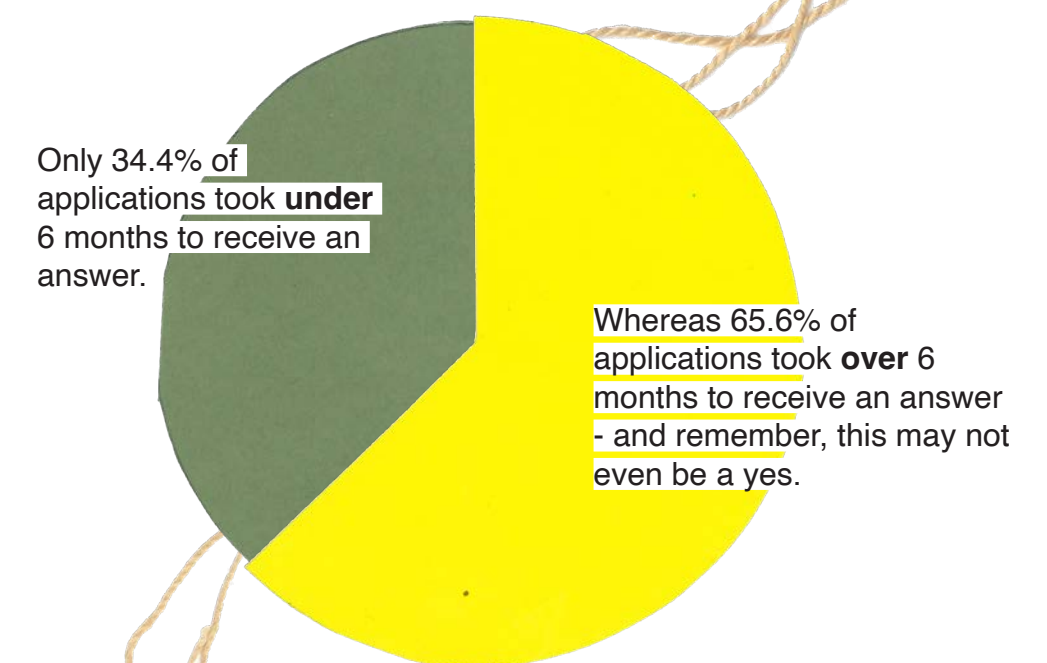
There are three types of accommodation; Initial, dispersal and contingency. None provide the necessary facilities or environment to form a healthy and happy life.

Firstly, is £49.18 a week in funding to pay for necessities such as hygiene products, clothing, food (in some instances), transport and mobile phones.

**Initial accommodation example:**



In 2024:



"I feel all alone." - Tariq

Seeking asylum is a time consuming, profoundly inefficient process littered with disparities. The lack of access to recourse, application, suitable accommodation and community takes significant mental and physical tolls of some of the worlds most vulnerable people.





## A Common Thread.

- where birthdays can be celebrated or communal meals can be cooked. It's a place that helps with societal integration, community curation and the fostering of meaningful relationships.

A Common Thread utilizes textiles as a medium to explore this, its the foundation of which the culture, creation and community of A Common Thread is built upon. Its used to help, support and guide Women in asylum - reweaving the lost dreams, identities and community back into lives.

**A Common Thread is a;**

Collective project.  
Community.  
Home.  
Support system  
Shared language.  
Resource.

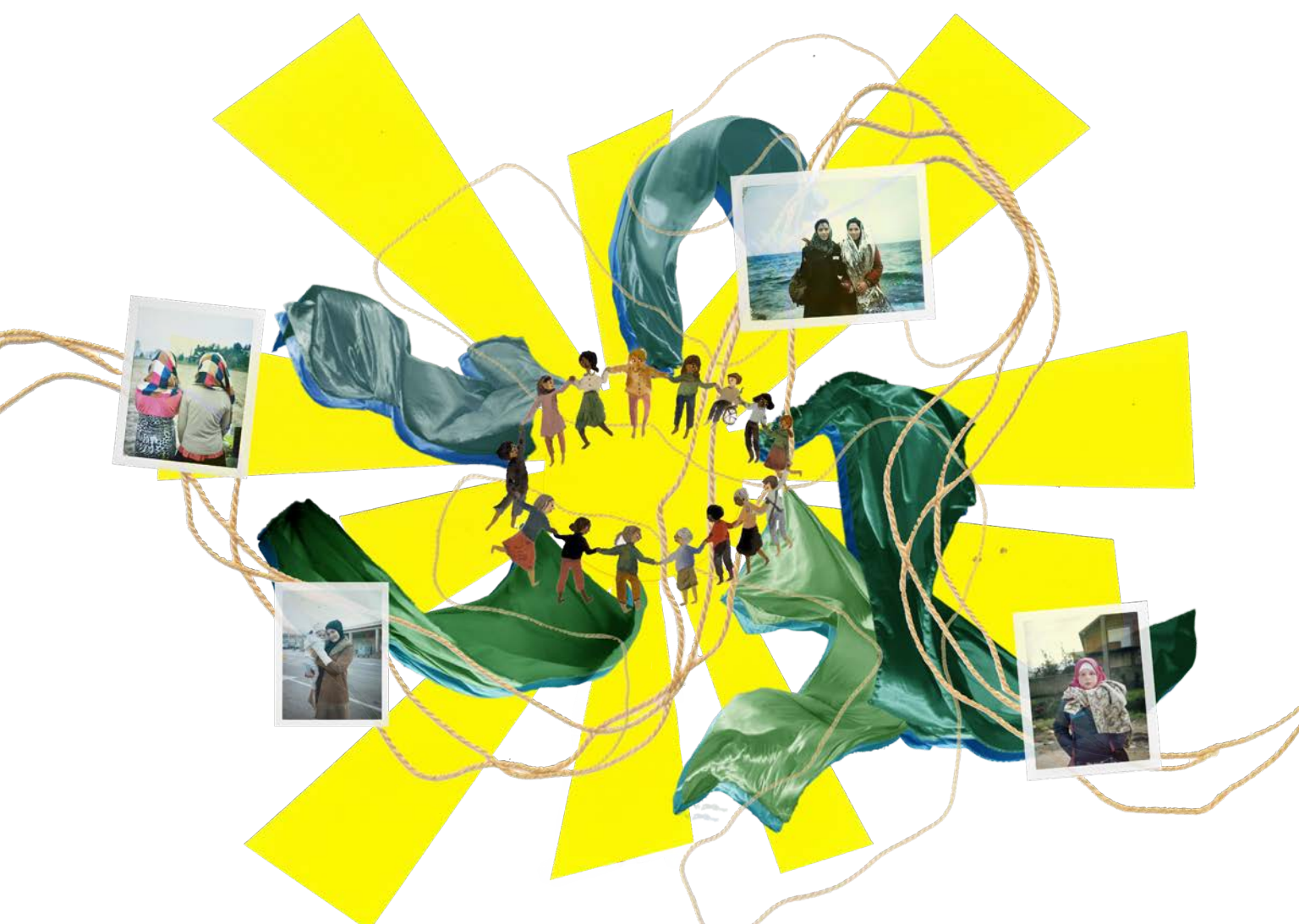
Understanding the realities of people seeking asylum can be overwhelming. The stress, trauma and isolation they are exposed to is simply incomprehensible. The problems they face are extensive and often unsolvable at the hands of someone with so little recourses.

Through research - broad or small, it becomes easy to understand why support systems are vital to the well-being of this incredibly vulnerable group of individuals.

### How does A Common Thread help?

A Common Thread is about providing what initial, dispersal or contingency accommodation cannot. It's there to provide the stability, community and recourses necessary to form a prospective life - the permanent fixture in a life full of uncertainty.

It's not just a support system, its a home



Exhibition hall - in use:



Sewing lab:

## Why textiles?

Along perilous and unrelenting journeys, deeply personal garments are lost, discarded and damaged. Upon arrival asylum seekers may only have **one set of clothes**.

Textiles are a fundamental means of self expression, identity and comfort. Surrounding and enwrapping us, they evoke our past, culture and identity - connecting us to a profound level. They are an extension of ourselves.

### How it works:

Since Asylum Seekers receive such little financial support, clothes are often an afterthought - becoming a strictly practical possession. A Common Thread provides Women seeking asylum the opportunity to create, mend and recycle more culturally appropriate garments to put over them and their families shoulders. Something they can wear with confidence and comfort.

But its more than that. With the facilities provided, decorative items such as mats, wall hangings and rugs can made to improve the environments they are obliged to live in.

The textile practice is also utilized as a tool to advocate for change within the asylum system. Through textile exhibitions - held at A Common Thread, Women seeking asylum are given the unconventional opportunity to speak of their lived experiences to promote and advocate for change in how their perceived and treated.

Moreover, textiles are the gateway to the community, recourses and stability that women seeking asylum are in desperate need of.

**It's about weaving identity back into their lives. Its a means of creative expression, a distraction - something to aim towards. Its about exposure, integration and belonging.**

Textiles are the common ground that thread us together, regardless of nationality, ethnicity or identity.



## Site rationale:



Long being a site of resilience, reinvention, and radical community spirit. Hulme has historically been shaped by waves of migration, social housing struggles, and activism. It has a legacy of welcoming difference and fostering solidarity - it understands survival, adaptation, and collective care. A Common Threads placement here is not just a backdrop, but a natural extension of Hulme's ongoing narrative.

Located within a walking distance from public transport networks, its partially central location balances out commute times with a peaceful environment. Tucked away from

main roads, it offers privacy from what can be an overwhelming outside world. While the buildings large footprint is ideal for community events, circulation space and chance interactions - it juxtaposes the cramped confinement asylum accommodation offers.

Additionally, outdoor space to the north, east and west is ideal for a perch outdoors and scope for events.

More symbolically - being a hippodrome, it has a rich history in community-based applications.

## Why now?

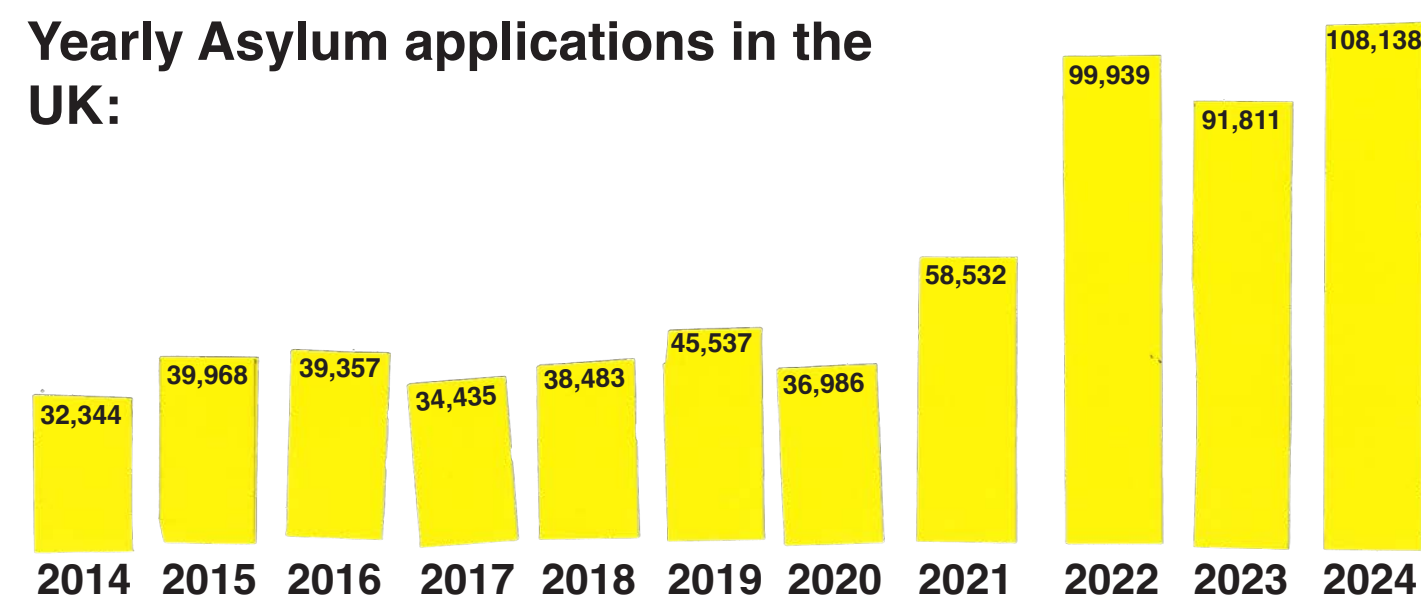
The increasingly uncertain political climate around the world is driving a rise in asylum applications across the region, the country, and the continent - making it integral facilities are built now to accommodate both current and future populations.

**In 2023 there were:**

# 1,130,345 Asylum applications

**In Europe (EU27 countries and UK) - compared to 698,760 in 2019.**

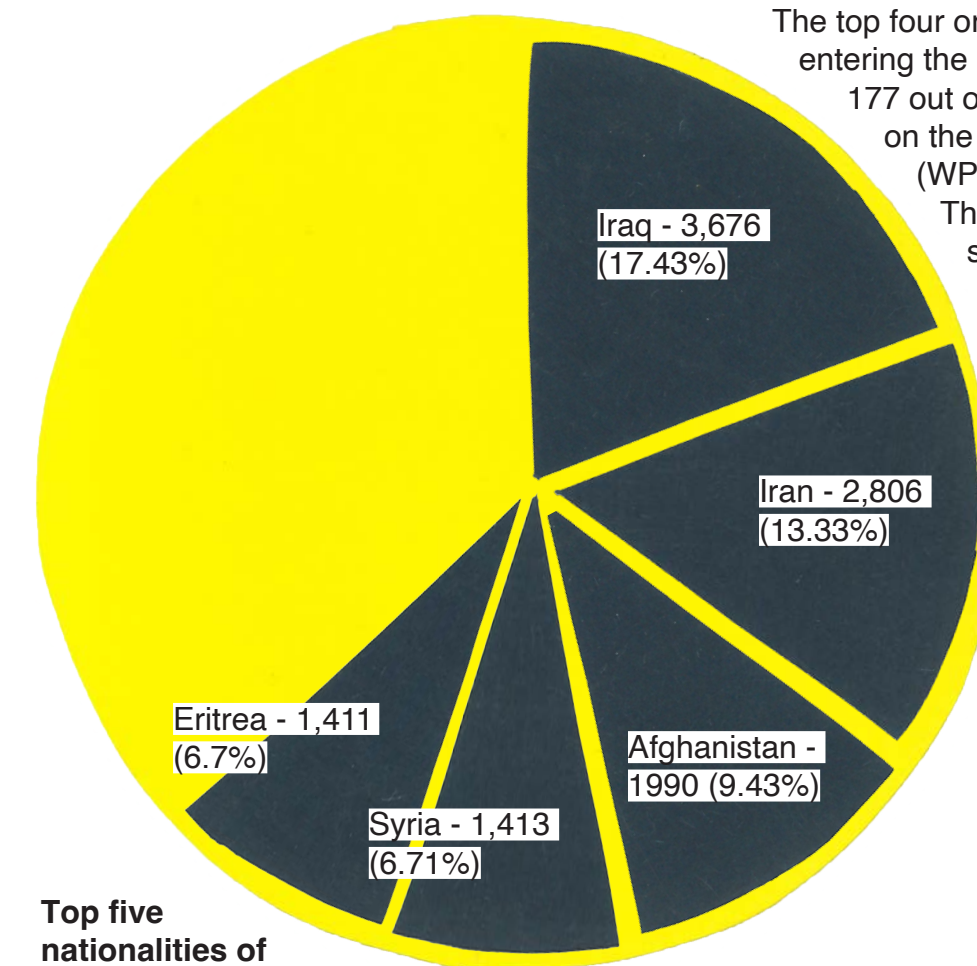
## Yearly Asylum applications in the UK:



21,084

That's the **highest** number of asylum seekers relative to its regional population in the UK.

# Why women?



The top four origin countries of Asylum seekers entering the UK rank 140, 168, 171 and 177 out of the 177 recorded countries on the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) index. (Eritrea is unranked). This means many women asylum seekers are entering the UK come from backgrounds of suppression, w

In addition, all these countries have ongoing, rich cultures and traditions surrounding textiles - which are typically produced by women.

In the knowledge that women have

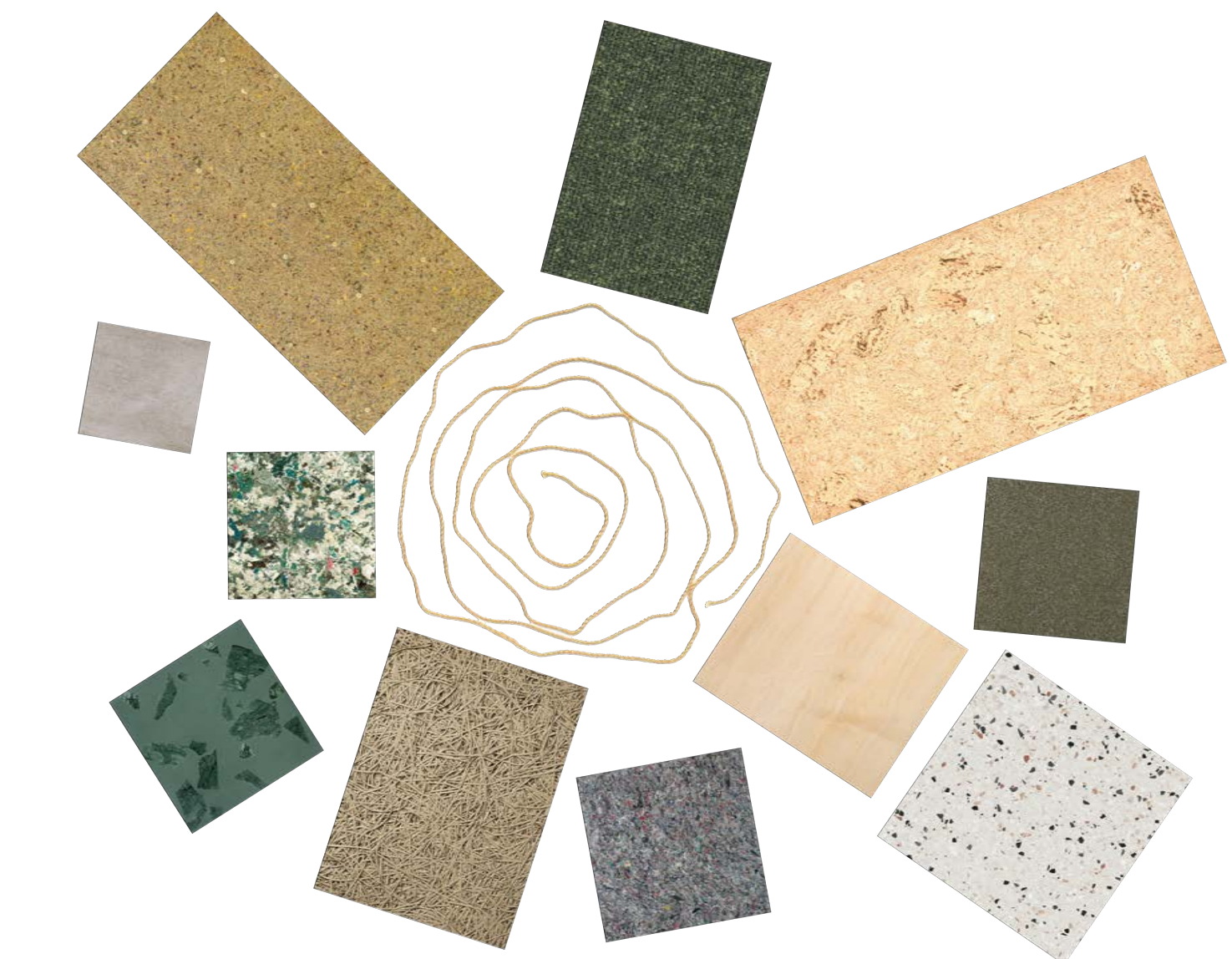
### Top five nationalities of asylum seekers in the north west

### Design strategy:

A Common Threads design strategy is all about supporting and encouraging the wellbeing of its users. In response, spaces have been carefully curated to make effective use of natural light, acoustic controls and biophilic elements (like a balustrade that mimics natural forms in its shadow) to create an environment that evokes feelings of serenity and mindfulness.

As a base for all visual elements, earthy tones and natural materials have been chosen to best mimic the outdoors - especially for the main hall which doesn't have access to many horizontal windows. In conjunction with this, carefully placed punchy green and yellow hues ensure the environment remains visually interesting - without being too busy to overwhelm users or divert attention away from exhibition works when on display.

### Material palette:





Rationale of schedule of accommodation:

**Exhibition Hall:** At the Centre of A Common Thread, no more than a doorway away - the exhibition hall is an embodiment of all the people who use a common thread. Where private experiences become public expression - it represents, resilience, optimism and hope.

**Communal kitchen:** A kitchen is the heart of every home, it’s fundamental to community curation. It’s the base in which meals can be shared, cakes can be baked, stories can be shared and hearts can be warmed.

**Living Room:** Often overlooked in asylum support facilities - the living room offers what many cannot - a home away from home. Somewhere to share a pot of tea, read a book or take a quite nap. From inactivity to occupation, its somewhere to find comfort and solitude.

**Library:** A pivotal resource for learning the English language, utilized as a buffer space between the more social environments a common thread offers.

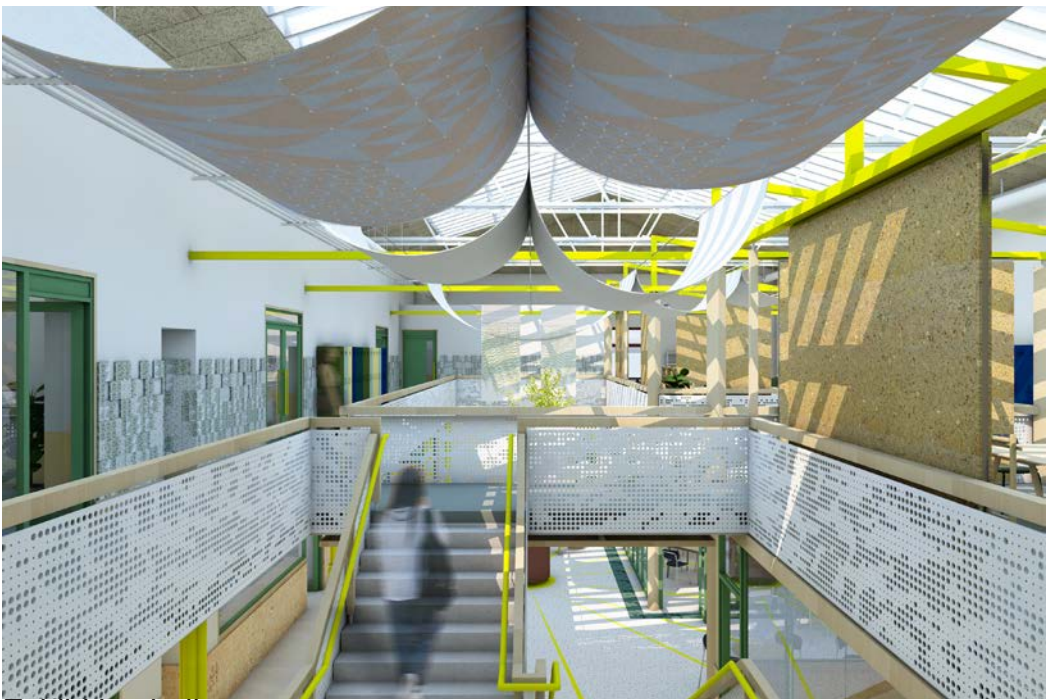
**Computer Study:** Access to the Internet is an essential resource to successful societal integration in the 21st century. The computer study provides asylum seekers with the opportunity to access online recourses which may be gateways to better futures.

**Workshop:** The beating heart of A Common Thread, the workshops are where identity’s are rediscovered, skills are exchanged, and meaningful social relationships will blossom. The creative output this space will is integral in the wider social recognition of asylum-related challenges.

**Hulme Repair, Mend and Recycle:** This program is all about wider community involvement - its how Hulme weaves its way into A Common thread. Locals can hand in garments they wish to be altered, repaired or upcycled - from which all profits will help to indirectly fund a better life for people seeking asylum. It will help generate interest about the facility and offer skill-building opportunities.

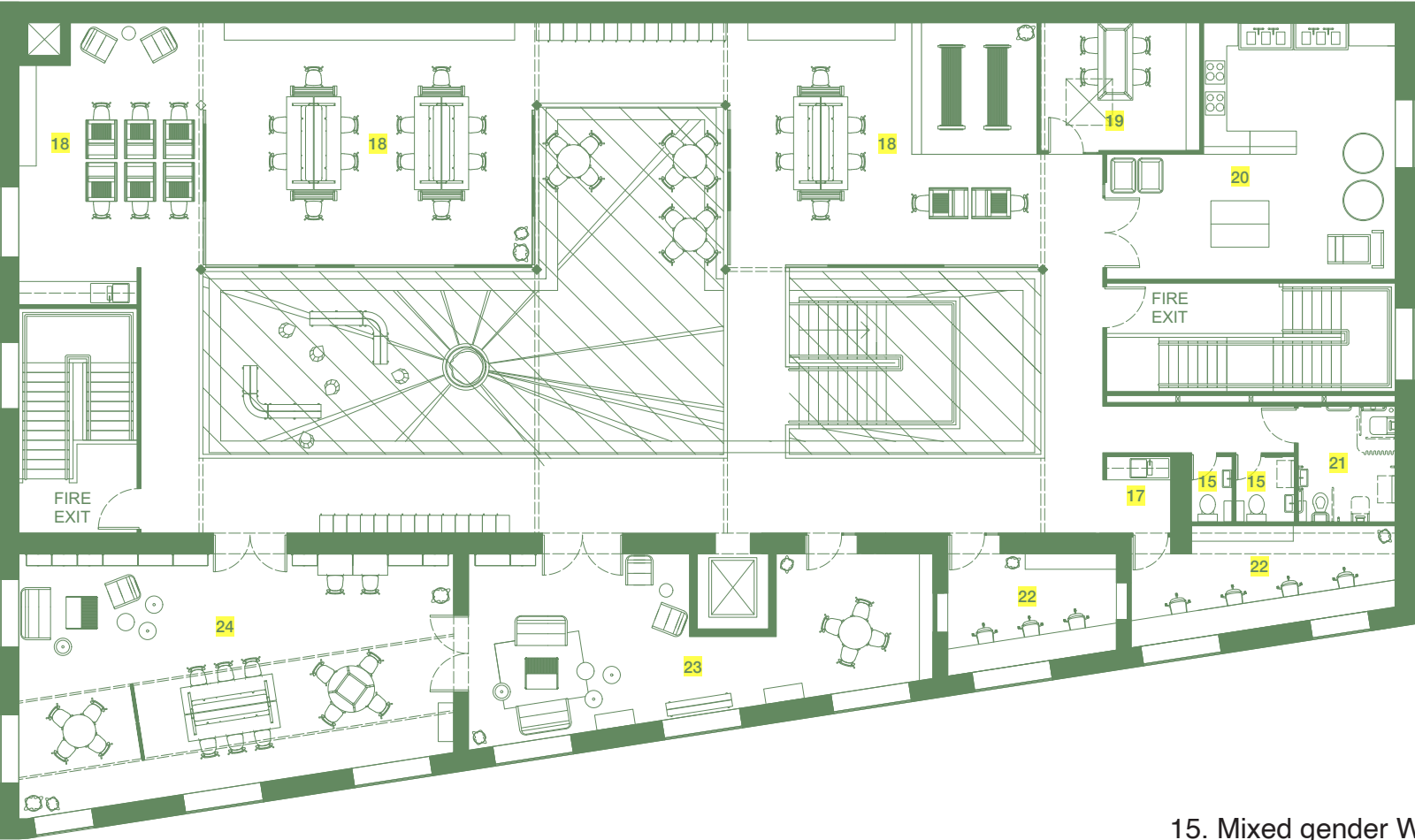
**Personal studios:** These rooms are all about autonomy, giving the women a space where they can explore their own endeavors without question or oversight.

**Learning loom:** A practical space which holds a variety of lessons to help better integrate asylum seekers in to society - possibly one of the most important rooms to people seeking asylum.



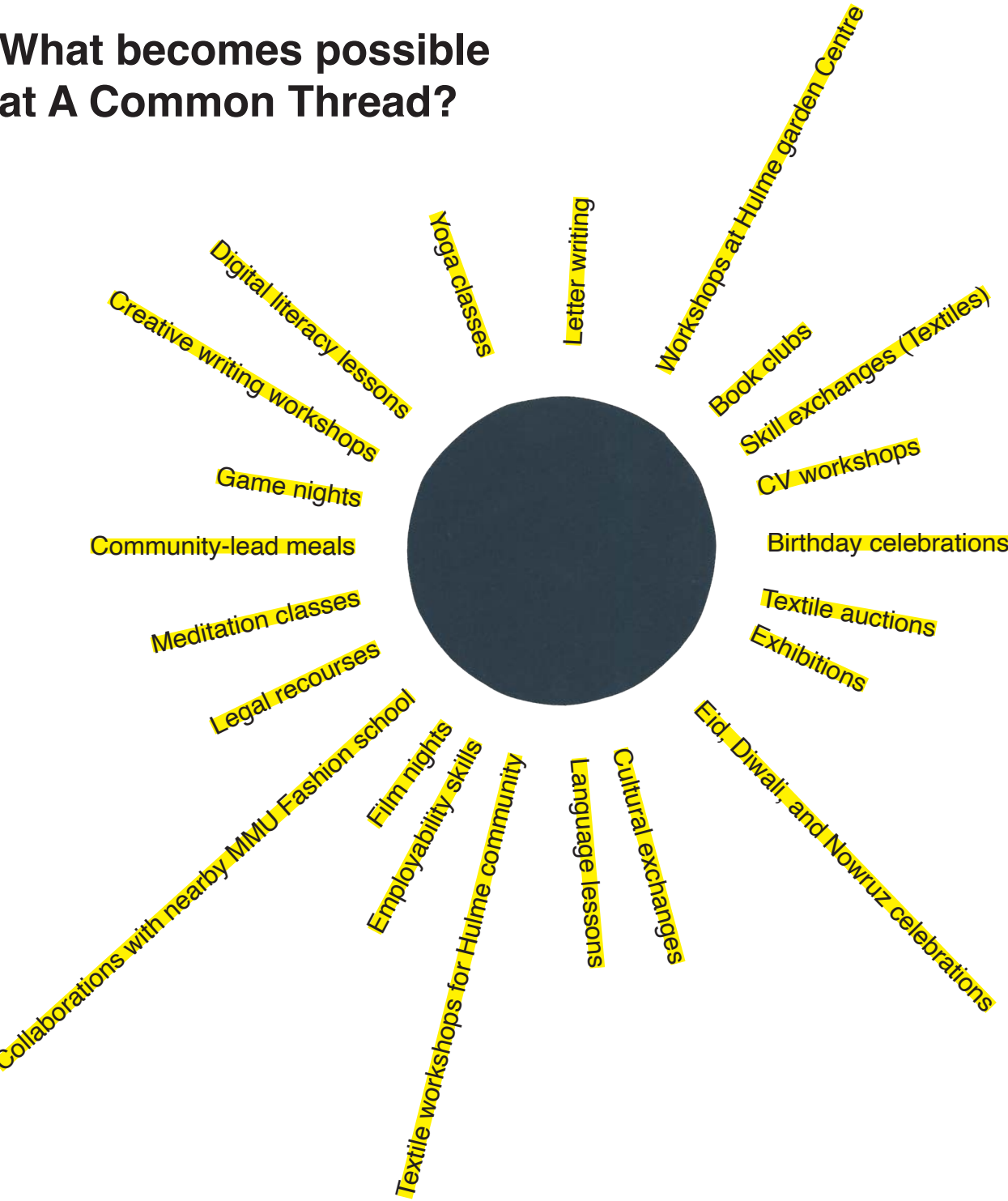
Exhibition hall:

First floor plan:



- 15. Mixed gender WC
- 17. Kitchenette
- 18. Workshop/studio
- 19. Meeting/quiet study
- 20. Dyeing and drying
- 21. Disabled WC and shower
- 22. Independent studio space
- 23. Living room
- 24. Learning Loom

What becomes possible at A Common Thread?

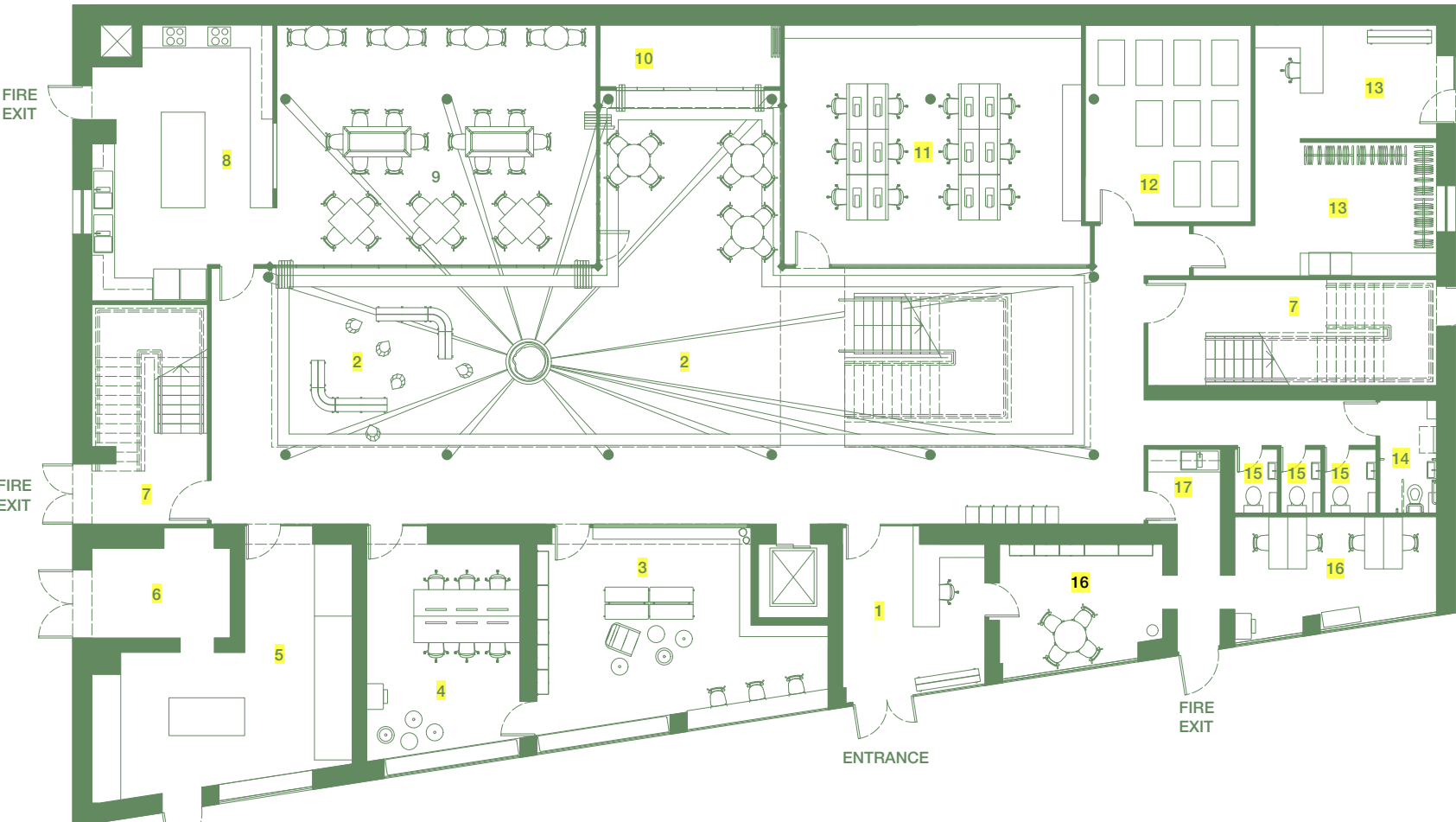


Learning Loom:



Library:

Ground floor plan:



- 8. Communal kitchen
- 10. Store
- 11. Sewing lab
- 12. Prayer room
- 13. Hulme repair, mend and recycle.
- 14. Disabled WC
- 15. Mixed gender WC
- 16. Staff office
- 17. Kitchenette

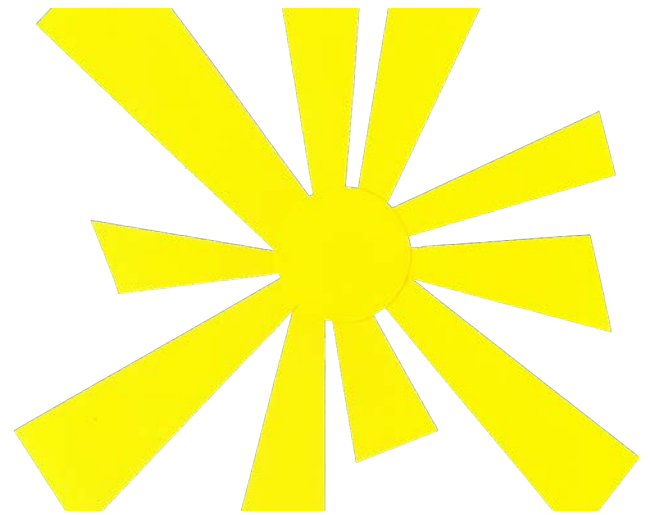
Exhibition Hall:



# A bit more about the exhibition:

Used as a tool to advocate for change and challenge negative perception - Textile exhibitions - held at A Common Thread, give Women seeking asylum the unconventional opportunity to speak of their lived experiences – a powerful form of expression and empowerment.

## Design details:



A Common Threads sunlight logo:

Held regularly, these exhibitions invite the wider community to discuss artifacts created by the women, providing them with vital opportunities to engage and integrate with society.

These exhibitions may also weave their way into museums, galleries and other public spaces - promoting discussion for change.

Textiles are the foundation of which culture, creation and community at A Common Thread are built upon. Somewhere where skills can be exchanged and friendships can be formed.



Example panel: with the Jasminum sambac - Syria's national flower.

### Representing the users of the space:

A subtle design gesture woven into the foundation of A Common Thread, bespoke acoustic panels have been created using Organoid's ALMWIESN absorber as a base. Within the first-floor workshop, twelve panels will each feature the national flower of one of the top twelve countries of origin for asylum seekers—a quiet yet meaningful nod to home.

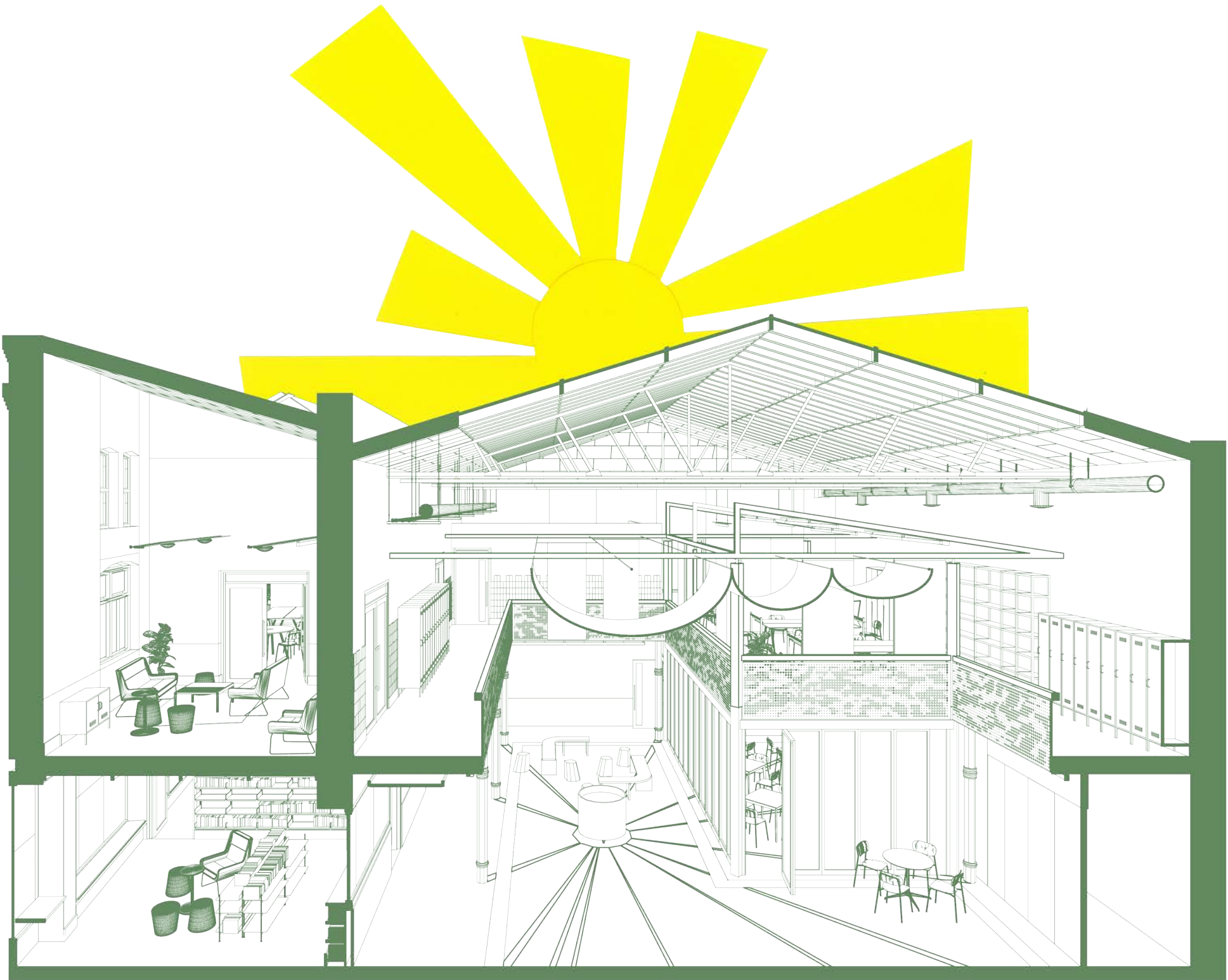
A Common Thread understands that to make the largest impact - it must act as a destination, rather than a accommodation.



Exhibition Hall:



Living room:



### Designing for future use:

For easy wayfinding and future-proofing, room labels have been designed to be interchangeable, allowing the most widely spoken languages at A Common Thread to be updated as demographics change.