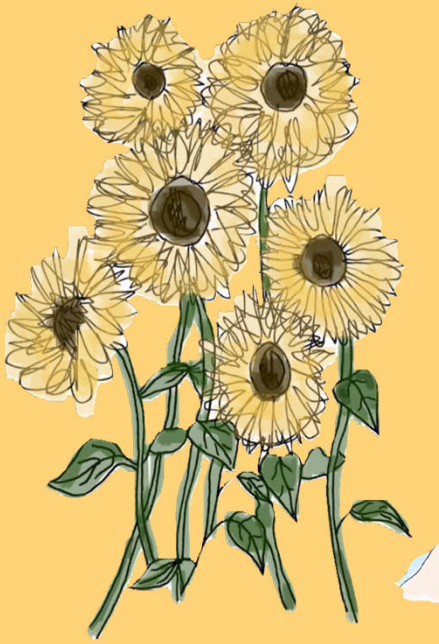
LOOP



This project has been nominated for Interior Futures because it was created by the student to address a lack of supported physical environments appropriate for those with early-onset Alzheimer's and their surrounding network (family, friends, colleagues). LOOP is a day centre, where families can reunite and engage in everyday activities in a safe but non-clinical setting. This new approach to interior space seeks to support independence, to continue where living a full life previously stopped. It challenges the current status quo of interiors for Alzheimer's.

Design as a treatment for people with Alzheimer's

There is no current cure for Alzheimer's, but medications are available to help symptoms. Literature suggests that one of the most efficient ways to treat Alzheimer's is a combination of pharmacological support and safely designed environments. There are many sub-types of Alzheimer's, meaning designing a space to satisfy all types becomes difficult within the context of one building. This led to a focus on early-onset Alzheimer's.

Early-onset typically affects younger people, leading to more specific issues and symptoms which can be targeted through environmental adaptations. Specialised environments for those with specific medical issues, such as Alzheimer's, are often overlooked due to economic issues, time and space. But, because there is no current cure, considerable attention is required regarding designing environments for those with Alzheimer's.

The design of the built environment is influential on peoples well-being.

(DeBotton, 2006)

Brief

Having a diagnosis of a disease with no current cure can cause emotional trauma - not only for the individual directly affected, but also for the family. LOOP was created in the hope of changing this so that families and individuals can be supported through the diagnosis and specific symptoms of early-onset Alzheimer's.

LOOP is a day centre, where families can reunite and engage in everyday, mundane activities in a specialised environment - something they may not be able to do anymore within a non-specialised setting. It feels like home, rather than a clinical setting, where independence is supported and promoted, not hindered.

Early-onset Alzheimer's affects 1 in 20 people under the age of 65.

(NHS, 2021)

The project name *'LOOP'* refers to the users journey throughout the building. A clear, visible spatial layout aids users, along with a strategic colouring, so that they feel confident to explore and find their way back, always keeping them 'in the loop'. LOOP aims to make life that little bit easier.

The driving force behind LOOP is supporting those with Early-onset Alzheimer's and their families. Alzheimer's is an incredibly complex disease, with many varying symptoms and subtypes, making designing an interior for those suffering within the context of one building difficult.

Using evidence based design, combined with a user centred approach, a meaningful design journey unraveled. When deciding how to occupy the site, it was clear from research that public and private spaces for visitors were necessary to create the feeling of 'familiarity'.

Staff areas are kept completely separate, as locked doors and 'dead ends' can be of great frustration. An Alzheimer-friendly cafe occupies the ground floor, with all aspects visible and easy to locate. Private kitchens and music boxes inhabit the first floor, opening back up to public spaces on the second with a bar and hairdressers.

Interviews

With Architect and Healthcare Professionals

	Question 1	Question 2
	Do you think clear colour contrasts between walls and floors of an interior space can help those suffering with perception issues?	Are there any architectural or interior design changes you have noticed which make a considerable difference when it comes to supporting those suffering?
Senior Architect	*"Yes. Well.. more specifically, tonal contrast is the key here. We look for tonal contrast between the walls, the flooring and the skirting boards."*	*"I think it depends on the specific environment the person is in. It's all about legibility of space - where would be the logical place to find the toilet in a space?"*
Nurse Practitioner A	*"Colour contrast can be helpful if used carefully. It would be important not to have patterns on the floor - e.g. darker areas may be misinterpreted as holes in the ground."*	*"Good lighting, good natural light is important. Having access to outdoor space - a safe garden area is really helpful for people living with dementia."*
Nurse Practitioner B	*Colour contrast between walls and floors can be key for way-finding. However, each individual is different, so what might help one may not help another."*	*"Having the ability to walk about freely is really important. It is very frustrating for those with memory issues to have restricted access, e.g. having dead-end corridors with locked doors."*

Interviews

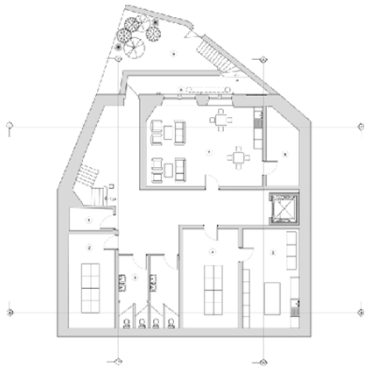
With Architect and Healthcare Professionals

	Question 3	Question 4
	Do you think having a circular spatial layout within a building would help with way-finding or increase confusion?	What do you think the most important element is when designing an interior space for those with Alzheimer's?
Senior Architect	*'Again this would depend on the context and the type of space. We know people with Alzheimer's benefit from having a sense of freedom in their space and find locked doors very frustrating, so it is logical that a circular layout can be beneficial as long as people can way-find."*	*"This is a difficult one to pick just one element, but I'd say the most important thing is always thinking about the space from the users perspective. But if I had to pick one thing that is overlooked it would be the quality of lighting."*
Nurse Practitioner A	*"Sorry - I'm not sure on this one. I think it depends on the individual to be honest."*	*"If someone living with Alzheimer's is having to move from their own home to live somewhere else then replicating the familiar would be important, e.g. the layout of furniture."*
Nurse Practitioner B	*"It can be successful where used correctly, however it depends on the context of the building and whether this would be possible to achieve or not."*	*"Having the ability to walk freely within a building. Giving people freedom to explore massively helps with frustration and confusion. Natural lighting is also a very important element."*

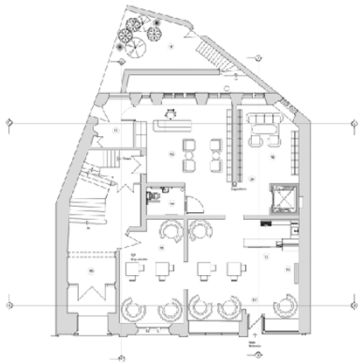
Research informed what sort of colours the building needed in order to create a safe, visible environment. The tonal tests revealed that orange, white and yellow are the most visible colours with a selected brown, wood floor.

Another key theme within research, is avoiding heavily patterned carpets and dark corners. Those with perception issues can perceive this darkness as a change in level and cause them to fall.

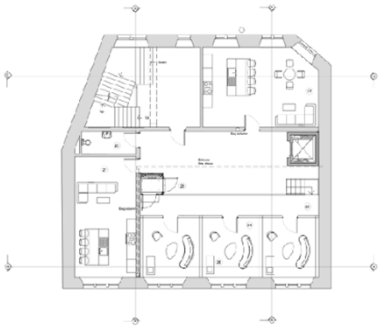
A simple, yet effective colour palette has been carefully selected through research and tests. Visitor safety is paramount, so making sure all surfaces are fully visible was important.



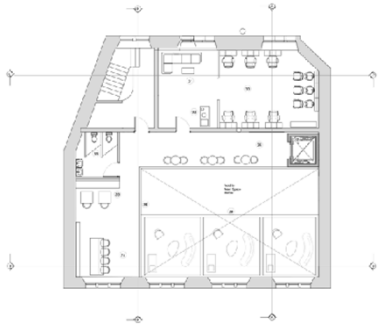
Lower Ground Floor Plan



Ground Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan

Sections

1:50 Model