

# “Here is my space”: A creative QIP to improve Young People’s (YP) mental health by developing a therapeutic space on a general paediatric ward

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## Introduction

In 2024, the RCPCH released a position statement highlighting the importance for paediatric ward design “to consider the distinct needs of adolescents” and to “integrate physical and mental health” [1].

We worked with YP to understand their experience of the hospital environment and reviewed current evidence linking physical space with improved emotional wellbeing. Using our findings, we co-designed a recreational space for YP admitted to a general paediatric ward, focusing on design elements beneficial to physical and mental health recovery.

## Methods

### Two cycle QIP

- **Plan 1:** Understand the impact of current and ideal ward spaces for YP
- **Do:** Literature review of evidence-based design, semi-structured interviews of ward staff (n=15) and YP (n=5) to understand their views on the current space.
- **Study:** Identify key themes and topics
- **Act:** Plan Cycle Two
- **Plan 2:** Consider options for implementing findings of Cycle One
- **Do:** Brainstorm mood boards and floor plan aligned with evidence-based designs; enlist interior design firm to generate final designs
- **Study:** Gather feedback on new designs from YP (n=9)
- **Act:** Apply for funding from hospital charity, share findings with colleagues

### Strengths

1. Multiple sources of feedback
2. Outcome reflects needs of local population
3. Readily reproducible design

### Limitations

1. Limited existing evidence base
2. Small sample size interviewed
3. Opportunistic sampling – risk of bias

## Results

### Cycle One

#### Themes:

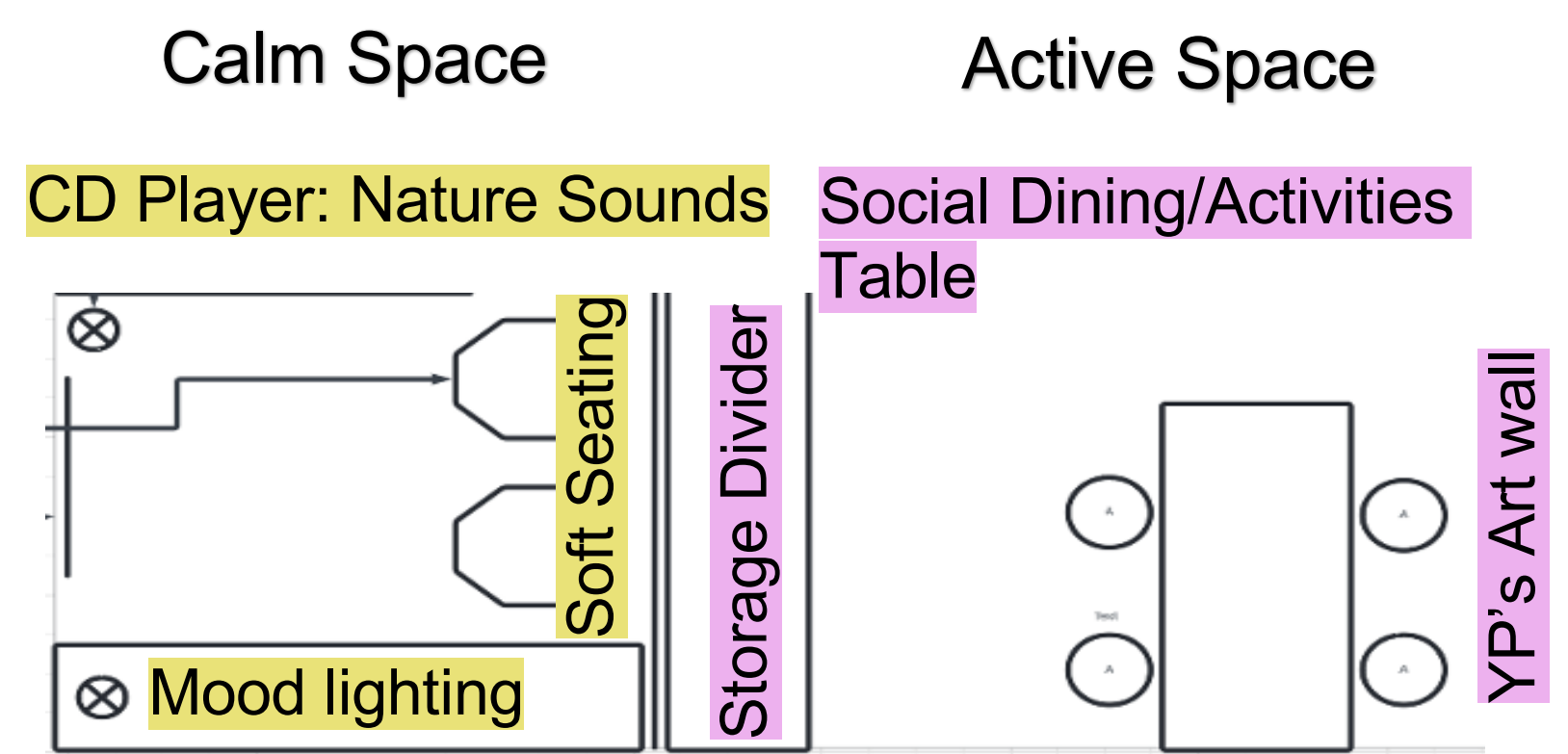
#### 1. Literature review:

- **Features:** **Nature**, **lighting**, **customizability**, **distinct spaces** and **appropriate activities** [2]
- **Impact:** **Reduced behavioral escalation**, **reduced admission length**, **reduced coercive measures** [3]

#### 2. Interviews:

- **Staff:** 94% felt current space was **not therapeutic**, 80% felt the ward was **not YP friendly**
- **YP:** Current space was “**claustrophobic**”, “**tired looking**”, “**gloomy**”, wanted the space to feel ‘**homey**’, with a “**separate space for teens**”, “**breakout area**” and “**personalised elements**”

### Cycle Two “Here is my Space”: The floorplan



### Before



### After



## Conclusions

Current evidence suggests that the physical environment can play a significant therapeutic role in the holistic treatment of young people presenting with mental health conditions requiring hospital admission. By working creatively with YP and external agencies, we have demonstrated that even small spaces can be transformed.

We hope that our project will inspire others to think of their ward spaces differently, considering how the resources available to them could be used to deliver developmentally appropriate healthcare (DAH) and improve the experience of some of the most vulnerable and underserved patients [4].

## References

- [1] The role of paediatricians in children and young people's mental health – RCPCH position statement (2024), 06/02/2024
- [2] Architectural Design Qualities of an Adolescent Psychiatric Hospital to Benefit Patients and Staff, Neda Norouzi, 16/10/2023
- [3] Keeping children and young people with mental health needs safe: the design of the paediatric ward, Health Services Safety Investigations Body, 23/05/2024
- [4] Making Healthcare Work For Young People: A Toolkit To Support Delivery Of ‘Developmentally Appropriate Healthcare’ In the NHS [Internet]. Northumbria: Northumbria Healthcare Foundation Trust; [Cited 2025 Feb 17]. Available from: <https://www.northumbria.nhs.uk/application/files/9416/5174/9229/nhs-making-healthcare-work-web-02.pdf>