

Safe and secure

This new mental health secure unit in Newcastle was the first of five high profile national pilot schemes that were initiated by the Department of Health and designed to provide an enhanced environment for patients.



Overview

A major development for personality disorder services in Newcastle, Bamburgh Clinic provides a secure, therapeutic environment for patients some of whom have committed criminal offences and require long-term care.

The unit has 25 medium secure beds and 16 beds for patients with personality disorder. Support services include reception, a secure outdoor recreation area, meeting and interview rooms, and offices for healthcare professionals.

Work started on the project in November 2004 and cost about £18 million, finishing on schedule and to budget in April 2006. Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland Mental Health Trust were able to select their PSCP based on the good work they did on a previous scheme.

Malcolm Aiston, the trust's Associate Director of Estates and Facilities and the scheme's Project Director, said, "The patients are prone to self

harm and aggressive behaviour. The unit was designed to reduce such behaviour, which can lead to destruction of the building fabric." Internal spaces have a domestic feel and help to calm and reassure patients via a light, airy and uplifting atmosphere. The unit has a gym and good access to high quality outdoor spaces, including a sports barn with astroturf, where sports can be played all year round.

The design concept created secure boundaries for courtyards within the building. This resulted in there being only two short lengths of security fencing within the development. Good observation for staff and other service users was achieved by use of many windows onto the courtyards.

"There were some incidents with patients previously, but since moving in to the new building, there has been only one alert – and that was a false alarm," added Malcolm.



Achievements and benefits

- The project was completed on time and within budget.
 - Sustainability. The building uses a timber frame and rainwater harvesting to reduce the need for water supply and drainage off-site.
 - Movement sensitive lighting reduces electricity use.
 - Healthcare professionals were given full access to specialist suppliers from an early stage and were able to specify and test component products and finishes.
 - Immediately after handover, volunteers from the project team, (trust and PSCP), lived in the unit for four days to test the new facility and the proposed model of care before the introduction of the patients.
- Local residents were consulted on the development of the facility.
 - Building engineering services are maintainable from non-clinical areas, minimising intrusion of engineering staff on patient care.

“The feedback was that this practical exercise was very useful. It gave us an opportunity to spot any snags and the construction team gained a real understanding of what it would really be like for staff and patients using the building.”

Malcolm Aiston



Principles and objectives

The trust wanted a new modern facility to replace some of the existing Victorian buildings and provide a therapeutic, safe environment for patients vulnerable to self harm and prone to aggressive behaviour. It was essential that the solution recognised the particular constraints of a mental health environment.

Phase 1 of the development – a ten-bed Interim Personality Disorder Unit – overlapped with the design and construction of Phase 2.

“Phase 1 won an award for Best Practice at the Constructing Excellence North East Awards, therefore Phase 2 had a hard act to follow,” said Ian Turnbull, Laing O’Rourke ProCure21 Project Leader. “We did a lot of work with the trust to aid joint understanding of patient and user needs, project procedures and shared objectives.”

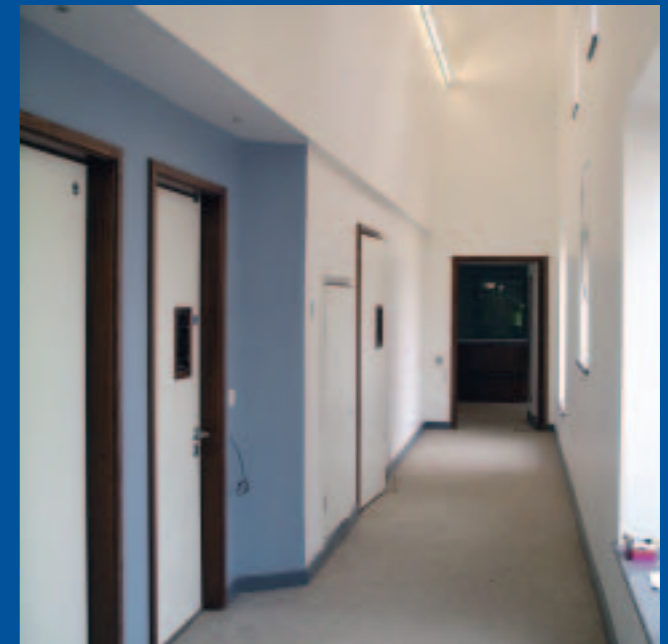
Malcolm said, “Because we all had open minds and were willing to explore possibilities before committing to decisions. We broke down barriers and came to understand why things can go wrong. The PSCP, that also worked on Phase 1, brought continuity and expertise in the form of its supply chain and we were able to engage with the PSCP quicker than traditional procurement routes.”

Major issues

The development was on a congested site, bordered by residential properties, a wildlife centre and a Royal Mail postal depot. Before work could start, the trust had to purchase and demolish a fish factory which stood in the way of construction. Furthermore, trust services were ongoing and could not be disrupted during the course of the project.

Another issue was routine maintenance in the old building, such activities disrupted patient care and had impacted on costs, because maintenance visits had to be accompanied by two estates staff and one mental health nurse.

The solution in the new unit was a walkway above patient bedrooms and corridors, allowing discreet maintenance to be carried out while protecting the quality of the clinical environment for staff and patients.





Successful initiatives

- The team embraced modern methods of construction and opportunities for off-site manufacture wherever possible. In line with this, they chose a timber frame structural solution, manufactured off-site and erected on site rapidly in large prefabricated panels. This brought numerous benefits including a reduced on-site programme of works, improved health and safety and less construction traffic. The project team went to considerable lengths to ensure that the timber frame would afford a high level of robustness and acoustic integrity.
- The trust has created a good long-term relationship with its PSCP and is now jointly involved in the pre-construction stage of a major Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and Learning Disabilities (CAMHS) development as well as an innovative Minor Works Programme.

“We were very impressed by the speed with which they responded to our development brief,” said Malcolm.

“They had a real desire to understand our service requirements and provide us with value for money options, such as the sports barn and rainwater harvesting system, from which to choose. We are very happy with the final scheme.”

Malcolm Aiston

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