

Sandal Library – Our first Dementia Friendly Library

Sandal Library received a major internal and external refurbishment in 2015. The interior was redesigned so that people living with dementia will feel comfortable, supported and more independent. Planned in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society, Sandal Library became the district's first dementia friendly public building and at the time of writing, is likely to be the first fully dementia friendly library building in the country.

The new design incorporates all the recommendations made by the Alzheimer's Society to remove barriers to make the library a dementia friendly building, including:

- A reduction in reflective surfaces as people living with dementia can sometimes think they are much younger than they really are, and become confused and concerned by an older reflection staring back at them. We didn't install mirrors, avoided using chrome legs on tables and chairs and applied a specially designed decal to cover the glazed sliding doors for this reason.
- The avoidance of purple, green and blue as they all look the same to a dementia sufferer; instead we've introduced deep red as the signature colour. Red has been selected for its qualities as a warm positive colour; it's reenergising, awakening, and joyful and reminds people of festivity, love and passion
- An avoidance of spots and stripes on chair fabrics and rugs as these can be confusing with detailed patterns sometimes appearing as if they are moving
- A move away from the stylised iconic executive office furniture used in our other schemes to more traditionally styled tables and chairs, of wooden construction. Those living with dementia cannot relate well to pieces of furniture which don't look like a traditional chair or a table and are reluctant to use them.
- The avoidance of black entrance mats as these look like large holes in the entranceway. Our traditionally black coloured self-service machines are finished in crimson for the same reason.
- The avoidance of the patterned children's library area rug being laid down permanently as these can look like pools or gardens to people with dementia – the rug is laid during storytimes only.
- Rather than light birch and white, an oak finish to doors, shelving, chairs and tables provides a warmer feel
- Grey skirting boards and door frames which easily define the entrances/exits and wall edges and contrast against the cream coloured walls
- Sofas and easy chairs with high arms finished in a soft vinyl to assist people to lower/raise themselves in and out of the seats
- By redesigning the staff area, we were able to move the entrance foyer, turning the old entrance into a rest and relax space complete with a television showing digitised photographs of the local area on a loop so that visitors can reminisce.
- Signage and guiding is twinned with an appropriate symbol.

To make the library healthier, safer and more energy efficient the refurbishment, also included:

- Removing all the asbestos
- A complete re-wiring and a new distribution board
- PVC double glazed windows
- The installation of new sliding doors
- Two new DDA compliant ramps
- New welfare facilities for staff
- Energy efficient lighting
- An energy efficient combi-boiler
- A new roof, with extra insulation
- A new intruder alarm
- Emergency lighting (it didn't have this before)
- Fire alarm (it didn't have one before)
- A fire exit (it only had one entrance/exit before)
- Improved lighting at the side, rear and front of the building
- New carpets, furniture and shelving throughout
- Introduction of self-service technology
- New computer tables and chairs