

KARUS

THE COMFORT-CONTEXT ROOM



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## THE COMFORT-CONTEXT ROOM

A humane alternative and approach for the isolation room  
to manage situations of severe psychic distress and despair



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## CONSTRAINT: AN ACTUAL PROBLEM

- One of the predominant goals in (Belgian and European) mental health is the diminishing of constraint and freedom restricting measures
- Inspection round in mental health care institutions (2016): in a first step focusing on the use of restraint on children and youth
- Advisory report of the Belgian Superior Health Council (2016) and the Report of CPT (2012, European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment): both focusing on the use of restraint in psychiatric institutions



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## SOME 'NUMBERS'?

- Lack of randomized controlled trials
- For once: numbers not so 'popular'
- Clearly great differences between countries and between different institutions
- Implication: it depends on mentality, leadership, priorities and culture in an institution



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## APPROACH: NEED FOR DIFFERENTIATION

- According to target group: psychosis, addiction, double diagnosis, mental disability, mood and anxiety disorders, ...
- According to age
- According to the professional environment: institution, psychiatric hospital, day center, ...



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## MOOD AND ANXIETY DISORDERS

- Suicidal tendencies
- Anxiety
- Obsessive thoughts and behavior
- Confusion
- Tension, high arousal
- Self-harming behavior
- Fugues
- ...



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## GENERAL GOALS OF THE DEPARTMENT

- Reduce the use of constraining measures to zero
- Focus on proximity and cooperation with the patient as well as his context (holding environment)
- Eliminate the isolation room by transforming it into a comfort-context room



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## APPROACH: 'NEGATIVE' FORMULATION

- If you don't have an isolation room, you can't use one
- No necessary need for restraining measures in the handling of current situations of psychic need and distress
- Possible problem: fugues





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## APPROACH: POSITIVE FORMULATION

- Approach a human being as you want to be approached yourself in a situation of psychic need and despair
- Be present and available (without being intrusive) in a holding environment



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## A COMFORT-CONTEXT ROOM

= a comfort room with an adjacent context room



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## COMFORT ROOM

- a quiet place
- with an open door
- in modern accommodation
- conform safety measures (suicide-proof)
- with an open view
- on a small garden (accessible via the context room)
- with the possibility to make connection with modern media (e.g. own music files).



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## CONTEXT ROOM

- via an open passage
- in direct connection with the comfort room
- with an infrastructural accommodation to stay for the day and the night (bed, seat, chair, table, connection to the internet, ...).
- creating an atmosphere of nearness: a holding and sustaining environment, but is not intrusive



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## COMFORT-CONTEXT ROOM

- The person in psychic need may appeal for help, but can also choose to stay alone with someone in the proximity.
- Together with the patient there is reflected whom the person in the context room may be (his/her partner, a good friend, a nurse, ... ).
- This is attuned with the partner, family member, the team, etc. as well.



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## RECOMMENDATIONS - INSPECTION

- The comfort-context room is going further than the legally formulated necessities.
- It integrates also some recommendations on:
  - General management of freedom restricting measures: reducing constraint and reducing isolations rooms
  - Adapted procedures
  - Including the context
  - Adapted means and infrastructure



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## CONFORM THE 'PANEL' – PRINCIPLES OF THE UNFPA (UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND)

- Participation (of all relevant persons)
- Accountability
- Non discriminatory
- Empowerment
- Legality

# Groundplan

Sanitary

Hall

Open  
door  
system

## Comfort room

with a big window, modern  
furniture and multi-media  
applications  
(Former isolation room)

Private  
garden

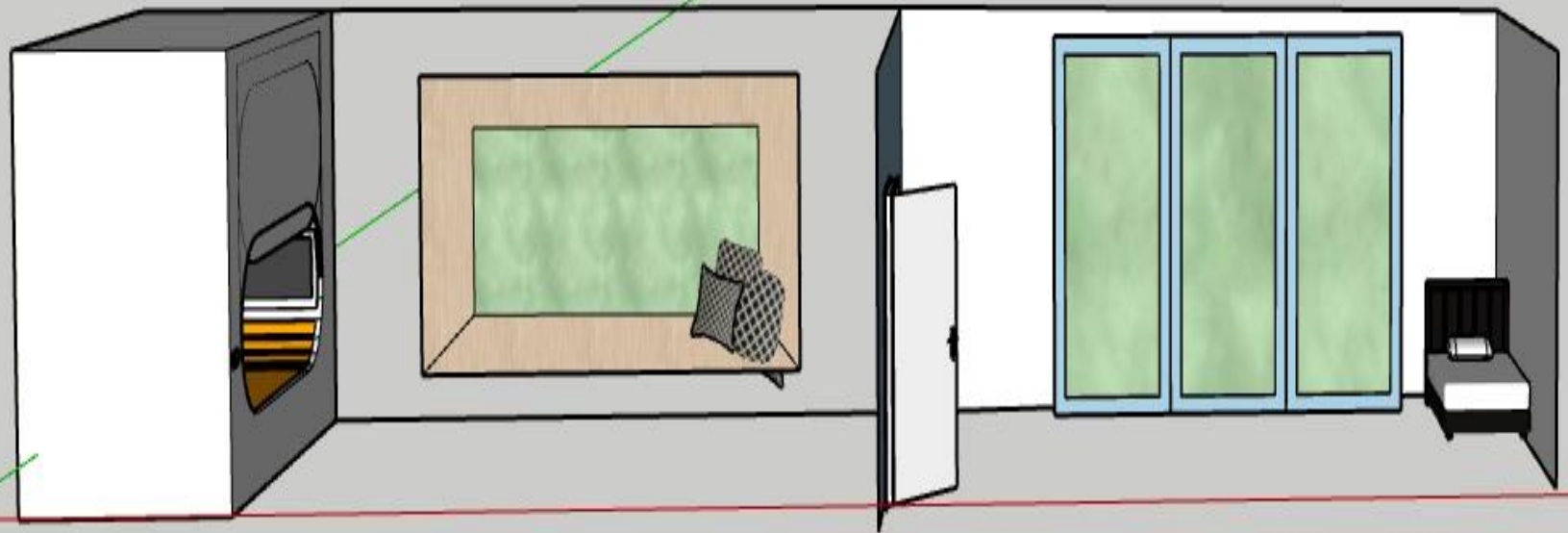
Passage to the  
context-room

## Context room

with modern accommodation and  
adapted to be also a family room.  
With access to a (small) outside  
private garden.



# First sketch



Isolation room  
before 'make-over' into comfort-room





Inspiring photo's - what it could be:  
comfort room with modern,  
suicide-proof furniture



Inspiring photo's - what it could be:  
comfort room with glass-box window





Time-out room  
before 'make-over' into context-room



Inspiring photo's - what it could be:  
context room with access to a  
small private garden







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## BASICS OF GOOD CARE

- Conform with human rights
- Each individual has unique needs and expectations
- An empathic attitude to the patient, the family and the network
- Respect and dignity
- Balance between freedom of choice and security
- Maintaining a constructive relationship between the person asking for help and the person giving help



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## PART OF AN INTEGRATED PLAN

- Ethical point of view: changing mentality and emphasizing an individual approach
- Infrastructural innovation, facilitating a more human approach
- Less restricting living rules in institutions (de-escalating effect)
- Psycho-education of team members
- Individual signalisation plan
- Working together with the context





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## FURTHER PURPOSES

- Evaluation of the concept
- trying out the concept in the handling of crisis situations for even more 'severe' target groups (psychosis, personality disorder).
- Create new 'standards' (sustained by the government) in the handling of situations of psychic distress and despair
- Spread as good practice in Belgium and abroad.



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## CONFORM PROF VALUES

- Minimal comfort
- Privacy: the combination of the two rooms is separated from direct contact with the rest of the department
- Security: safety- and suicide-proof
- Anti-loneliness: always someone available
- Non stigmatising solutions



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## CONFORM PROF VALUES (2)

- Inter generational: the context room creates the possibility for partners, parents (for children), grown up children (for parents) and team members to assist (and even overnight) in times of high psychic need.
- Respect: respectful handling in severe crisis situations.
- Flexibility: differentiation in nearness and amount of sustainment and privacy. Availability of modern media. The mini-garden may help in coping with a situation of psychic distress, despair, anxiety.



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## CONFORM PROF CRITERIA

- Interdisciplinarity: collaboration of psychiatrists, psychologists and nurses.
- 'Good practice' for the government in its search for reducing isolation and freedom restricting measures.
- Copyable by other hospitals and institutions for the same and other target groups and in other organizations who search for alternatives to handle crisis situations.



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no solitary 'isolating' room  
without context room



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WEBSITE (INSPECTION, ADVICES, ...)

- <https://www.health.belgium.be>

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