

SAFE HAVEN

Natural materials, access to daylight and a connection with the outdoors were all high on the wellness agenda for Noah's Ark children's hospice in Barnet, North London.

Architects Squire and Partners, one of a number of practices working on either a pro-bono or non-profit basis, answered the brief to provide a welcoming, uplifting space for the users: children with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions, their families, as well as staff, volunteers and community outreach workers.

The entrance hall of Noah's Ark is double-height, oak framed and fully glazed at each end to create a bright, airy environment. The furniture here is modular soft seating or chairs and tables mostly in hues of green, with the odd hint of primary colour, complemented by down lighters and pendants to encourage informal social interaction between families and Noah's Ark staff.





Murray Levinson, Partner at Squire & Partners, said: "Our concept focused on the experience of a child, creating a building set into the landscape with wings like outstretched arms, which invite families into the heart of the building."

The building is carved into a natural incline so there is a single-storey at the entrance and a lower level to the rear as the landscape slopes away. There are four brick-clad wings that run off the exposed timber and textural brick entrance hall, forming the shape of a butterfly – the symbol of the children's hospice movement. Within these wings there are facilities for the various therapies on offer plus the administration space and children's bedrooms. Lower ground level is where the more private functions such as bereavement suites, a multi-faith room and staff facilities can be found.

Each child's room has large windows and openable timber panels and there are desks and poster boards which can be easily personalised. Children's beds and mobility equipment can also be moved onto large south-facing external decks. Architect and design practice Gensler was responsible for the landscaping. There is an entrance garden which acts as a point of reflection and the raised accessible planters in the horticultural garden. Gensler also developed an infinity-symbol shaped accessible path. Alicia Gomez, Associate at Gensler, said: "We have a huge responsibility to deliver high-quality environments that facilitate the connection between people and place, and improve their physical, psychological and social wellbeing."

Noah's Ark / noahsarkhospice.org.uk

