

# Sensory Rooms



**AN ALTERNATIVE METHOD OF  
MANAGING ACUTE DISTURBANCE**

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No conflicts of interest

# Aims of the session



- To provide a brief introduction to sensory rooms
- To highlight the potential benefits of utilising sensory rooms on psychiatric wards
- To look at some of the evidence of the value of sensory rooms in reducing agitation
- To introduce the ES1 sensory room; including photographs of the room

# Introduction to sensory rooms



- A sensory room is a specially designed environment that offers a unique sensory experience
- Initially created as calming, de-escalating spaces but can also be immersive, interactive spaces
- Sensory rooms were traditionally used in paediatric and learning disabilities settings but there is evidence emerging that they can be beneficial in a range of other settings
- They are being used more often in adult psychiatric settings as an alternative method of de-escalation

# Looking at the evidence



- Sensory rooms introduced in 10 inpatient psychiatric units in Stockholm between 2012-2014
- Study focused on staff opinions and experiences of the sensory rooms and their impact on patients
- Some staff had some initial concerns but following use of the sensory rooms the feedback was generally very positive and staff reported a positive impact on the patients and the overall therapeutic atmosphere on the ward.



(Bjorkdahl et al 2016)

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# Looking at the evidence



- Study was part of a larger project called ‘Seclusion: Time for Change’
- Study focused on staff and patients experience of sensory modulation as a tool for calming and de-escalation



(Sutton and Nicholson, 2011)



- Patients felt better supported and cared for through use of the sensory room
- Sensory rooms provided meaningful distraction from boredom and was a potential alternative to PRN medications
- Strong consensus it's a useful tool for calming
- Sensory modulation supported the rapid building of trust and rapport between staff and patients
- No clear data gathered as to whether sensory rooms impact on seclusion and restraint rates from this study

(Sutton and Nicholson, 2011)

# ES1 Sensory Room



- A more therapeutic ward environment for the patients and staff
- To encourage positive therapeutic rapport between staff and patients
- To potentially see a reduction in the use of restrictive interventions, such as use of PRN medication, enhanced observations, restraint and seclusion
- Patients to improve skills in self-regulation of behaviour
- An alternative space to get respite from the often chaotic and noisy ward environment
- An alternative to more coercive interventions



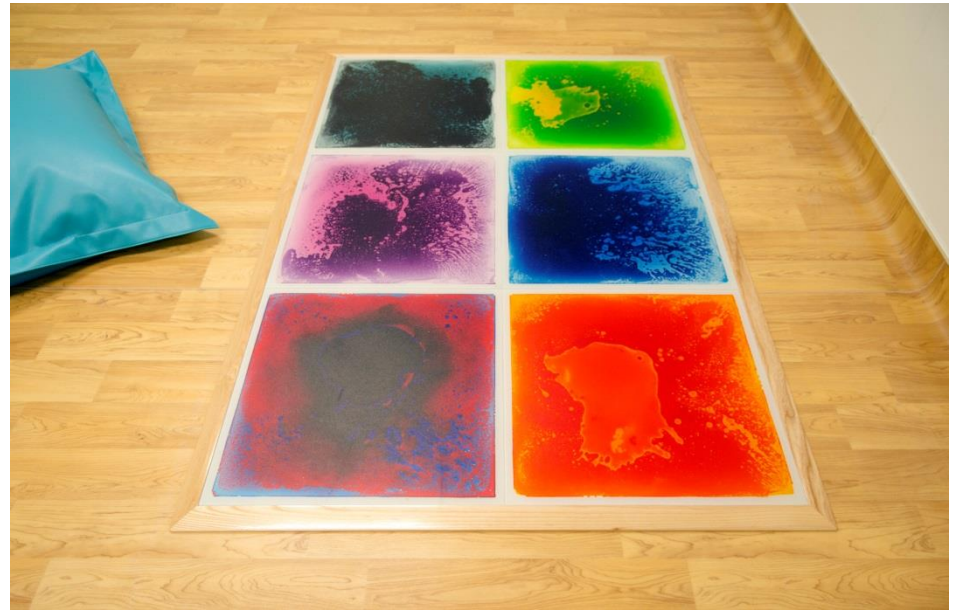
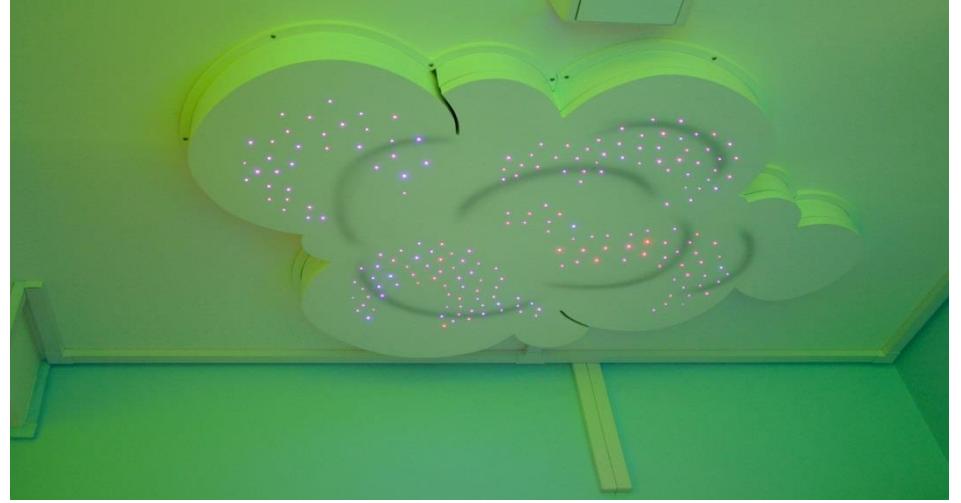


# ES1 Sensory Room



- Has been open for 19 months
- Still utilised very regularly
- Remains fully functional- no damages at this point!













# Use of the sensory room



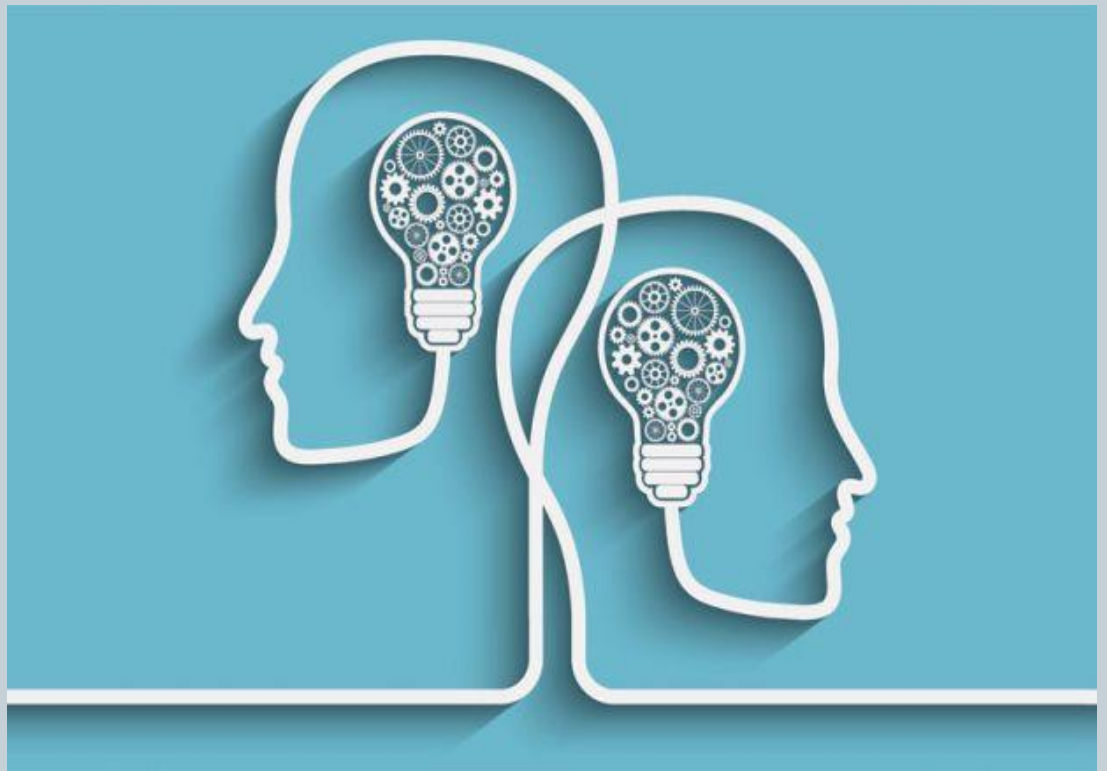
- Groups- relaxation
- 1:1 sessions  
(de-escalation)
- Lone patient use



# Patient feedback



- “the sensory room is a place to just ‘be’....”
- Peaceful
- Tranquil
- Interact
- Creative
- A doing space
- A thinking space





# Patient feedback



- The sensory room makes you feel calm
- It makes you feel atmospheric
- It transports you somewhere else
- It makes you feel relaxed to the optimum degree
- The sensory room makes you feel welcome
- You feel the liveliness and the peacefulness



# Summary



- Evidence is emerging that sensory rooms can reduce agitation and distress for patients experiencing acute disturbance
- This impact has been experienced first hand on ES1 ward since the sensory room has been open
- Overall, sensory rooms can improve the therapeutic atmosphere on the ward and make patients and staff feel more valued

# References



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