

MANCHESTER SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE

LGBTQ+

Young Carers

The Burrows

Young Mums

TALK SHOP



Visit msa.ac.uk for more information

Team

Grace Martin (MArch1)
Michael Oyekola (MArch1)
Ho Ching Ma (MArch1)
Gagan Govinda Rajan (MArch1)
Jie Zhou (MA AR)
Darcey Byers (FDN)
Miracle Osagie (BA1)
Daria Anwar (BA1)
Yagmur Iz (BA1)
Sara Kaissi (BA1)
Nandi Mahlangu (BA1)



Team Photo



Collaborator

TalkShop is a dedicated youth support hub that offers confidential advice and guidance to young people between the ages of 11 and 19. The organisation provides a safe, welcoming, and open-minded environment where individuals can seek support and feel heard without judgement.

Support is provided across a broad range of issues, including relationships, exploring sexuality and identity, conflict at home or school, emotional wellbeing, mental health, and social pressures. TalkShop aims to address the diverse and complex circumstances young people may face, consistently working to provide guidance, reassurance, and practical solutions tailored to individual needs.

Alongside one-to-one support sessions, TalkShop also delivers group activities and workshops designed to improve engagement, encourage social interaction, and foster a sense of community among young people. These activities create opportunities for creativity, collaboration, and peer support, reinforcing the centre's role as both a support service and a social space.

Throughout this project, our main point of contact has been Ben Atha, a Young People's Worker at Trafford Council. Ben has played a key role in connecting us with the young people who use the centre regularly, facilitating engagement sessions, and helping us gain a deeper understanding of the needs of both the users and the organisation. His guidance and insight have been invaluable in shaping the direction of the project and ensuring that our proposals respond meaningfully to the community TalkShop serves.

Introduction



Before the COVID-19 pandemic, TalkShop was a thriving hub where young people could socialise, participate in activities, and access a range of support services. Since the pandemic, however, attendance has declined significantly. In response, our collaborators at TalkShop are seeking to transform the space into a more contemporary and engaging environment that appeals to young people aged 11–19, while also providing more functional and flexible spaces for their needs.

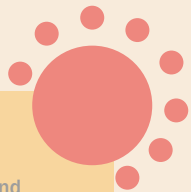
As MSA students, our primary aim is to reimagine TalkShop through a collaborative and community-led design process centred on the young people who regularly use the building. To better understand their needs and aspirations, we visited the youth centre and engaged directly with the young people through conversations, workshops, and interactive activities. These participatory methods allowed us to gather valuable feedback on how they currently experience the space, what they feel is lacking, and what improvements they would like to see implemented.

The project focuses on rejuvenating both the interior and exterior of the building, using the insights gained from these engagements to inform the design proposals. By creating more flexible, modern, and welcoming spaces, we aim to strengthen the relationship between the interior and exterior of TalkShop while fostering a stronger sense of belonging for its users.

Ultimately, we hope the redesigned TalkShop will provide a more enjoyable and inclusive environment that encourages young people to spend more time there, invite others, and raise greater awareness of the renewed space among young people across Trafford.



Getting to know each other



Ice Breaker

MSA Live and our TalkShop project prioritise inclusivity, balance, authentic collaboration, and gaining different perspectives from others. Our first week began positively as we got to know one another through a series of fun icebreakers, such as Human Bingo, where we learned about each other's favourite foods, subjects, interests, and personalities. This helped establish a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere within the group, allowing everyone to become acquainted more easily.

As conversations developed, we discussed the individual skills and strengths each person could contribute to the project, while also breaking down the dynamics between Foundation, BA1, M.Arch1, and MAAR students. This early collaboration helped build a strong sense of teamwork and encouraged open communication from the outset.

Initial Meeting with the Collaborator

Our initial meeting with our collaborator, Ben Atha, was highly insightful and productive. He introduced us to TalkShop's mission, the current challenges facing the space, and the aspirations for the project moving forward. The meeting gave us a clearer understanding of the site, the needs of the young people who use it, and the expected project outcomes. It also provided an opportunity for us to ask questions regarding the brief, helping to clarify uncertainties surrounding the site and the desired outputs.



meeting the collaborator

Ben explained that the main priorities were rebranding TalkShop and raising awareness of the space to amplify the voices of young people who are often unheard. As a group, we noted the age range of visitors, as well as the busiest days and times, to help us plan our engagement event more effectively. This helped us gain a better understanding of how the space is currently used and what improvements could encourage more young people to engage with the centre.

- 1. Site Map
- 2. MSA Talk Shop Poster
- 3. Soft Furniture moodboard
- 1. Working as a Team
- 2. Meeting at Talk Shop
- 3. Collage of Idea for the Talk Shop



Site Visit

Upon our arrival, Ben gave us a tour of the interior spaces within TalkShop, introducing us to the different areas and explaining how they are currently used by young people. We were also shown a refurbished room that could act as inspiration for the space we would be redesigning. After becoming familiar with the site and the area assigned to us, we discussed strategies for engaging with the young people present in the centre and how we could gather meaningful feedback in an approachable and interactive way.



Photographs of current Talk Shop Design

We began by introducing ourselves and explaining our aims for the TalkShop project. To encourage participation, we organised an interactive workshop where attendees were given floor plans and markers to sketch ideas, make adjustments, and suggest improvements to the space. To further support visualisation and engagement, we also brought a site model that allowed young people to place sticky notes with their ideas, additions, and comments directly onto the model.

Collaboration

When visiting TalkShop for our engagement sessions, we worked closely with the young people to understand how they use the space and what improvements they would like to see. We brought printed floor plans for participants to draw on and add their own ideas, helping to make the sessions interactive and collaborative.

Many of the suggestions included dedicated activity spaces, improved privacy, and new areas for socialising and wellbeing. Their feedback played an important role in shaping our design proposals and ensuring the project responds to the needs of the young people who use TalkShop.



What we learnt -
Through our engagement sessions, we learnt that the young people wanted the space to feel more welcoming, vibrant, and comfortable. Many participants suggested adding more colour to the walls, creating additional seating areas, and improving the overall atmosphere of the building.

They also expressed the importance of moving the reception area closer to the entrance to create a friendlier and more approachable first impression. In addition, suggestions such as improving the front door and adding clearer signage highlighted the need for a stronger and more inviting identity for TalkShop.

Engagement Findings

Quote from the young people -
 -'There sometimes nowhere to sit'
 -'It feels too much like collage'
 -'We would really like a music room'
 -'This is a place to get away for the stress of collage'



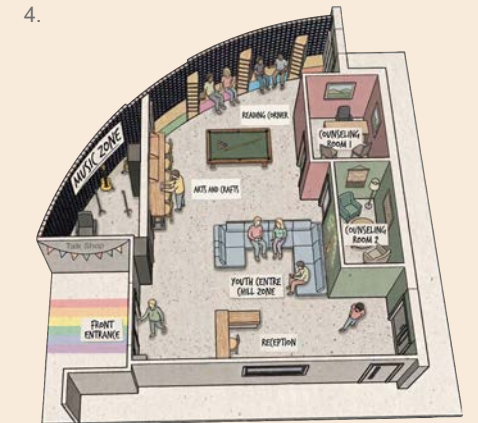
Mind Map of Findings



Design Development

Following our visit to TalkShop and the engagement sessions with the young people, two members of the group began developing initial sketch designs for the youth centre. These proposals were directly informed by the ideas and feedback gathered during the visit, including requests for more colour, improved seating areas, a more welcoming reception space, and a stronger entrance identity.

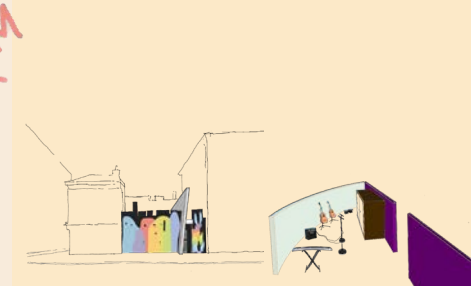
The sketches explored different ways of reimagining the layout and atmosphere of the centre while responding to the needs and suggestions shared by the young people.



Precedent Studies

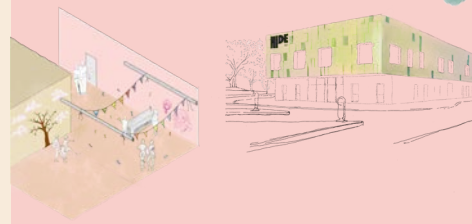
Precedent 1 - 42nd Street

42nd Street inspired our use of bright yet calming colours throughout the design, helping to create a welcoming atmosphere that promotes comfort, wellbeing, and self-expression for young people using the space.



Precedent 2 - Hide Out

HideOut Youth Zone inspired our approach to creating flexible and inclusive social spaces through comfortable seating, activity led areas, and a more open layout that encourages interaction, creativity, and a sense of belonging.



Feedback from Collaborator

As a group, we reviewed and voted on our favourite design iteration before sending it to our collaborator, Ben Atha, for feedback. Overall, Ben responded positively to the proposal and was happy with the direction of the design. He suggested adding more rugs throughout the space to create a warmer and more homely atmosphere. Ben also recommended including a dedicated phone charging area for young people, as finding spare plugs within TalkShop is often an issue. His feedback helped us further refine the design to better support the everyday needs of the users.



Re imagining the front door

One of our main project outcomes was redesigning the front entrance and signage for TalkShop. During our visit, the young people expressed the desire for a more appealing and welcoming entrance, including a rainbow floor mat that would better reflect the identity and inclusivity of TalkShop while attracting more people into the space. To develop ideas for the new signage, three members of the group each created a different design proposal. As a team, we reviewed and voted on the option we felt best represented TalkShop and the feedback gathered from the young people. The final designs are shown below.

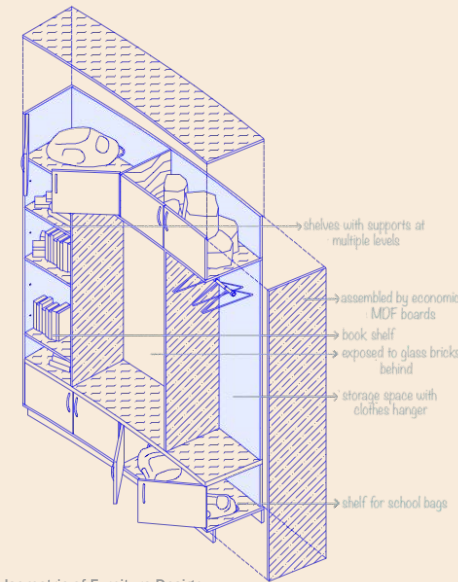
Iterations of Talk Shop Sign

1. 
2. 
3. 



Exterior View of Front Door Design

Rethinking the Furniture

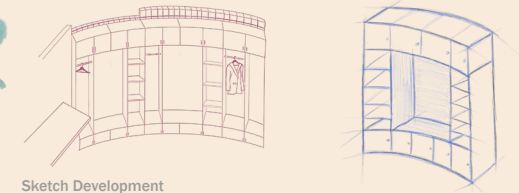


Isometric of Furniture Design

We decided to design a bespoke piece of furniture for the curved back wall, an area that appeared underused during our visit to TalkShop. The design was informed by the feedback gathered from the young people and incorporates features they felt were needed within the space. These included places to hang jackets, additional seating areas for socialising with friends, and storage for books and activities.

The furniture was designed using soft wood and pastel colours to create a warm, comfortable, and homely atmosphere within the youth centre.

We used our mood board to develop the furniture concept. Group members created different iterations before we refined the final design and shared it with Ben for feedback.



Sketch Development

"The reception area could feel friendlier with more colors."

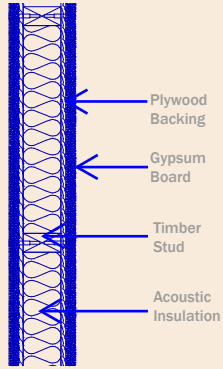
"Shelves to keep our books, puzzles, and art supplies would be great."



Visual of Furniture Design

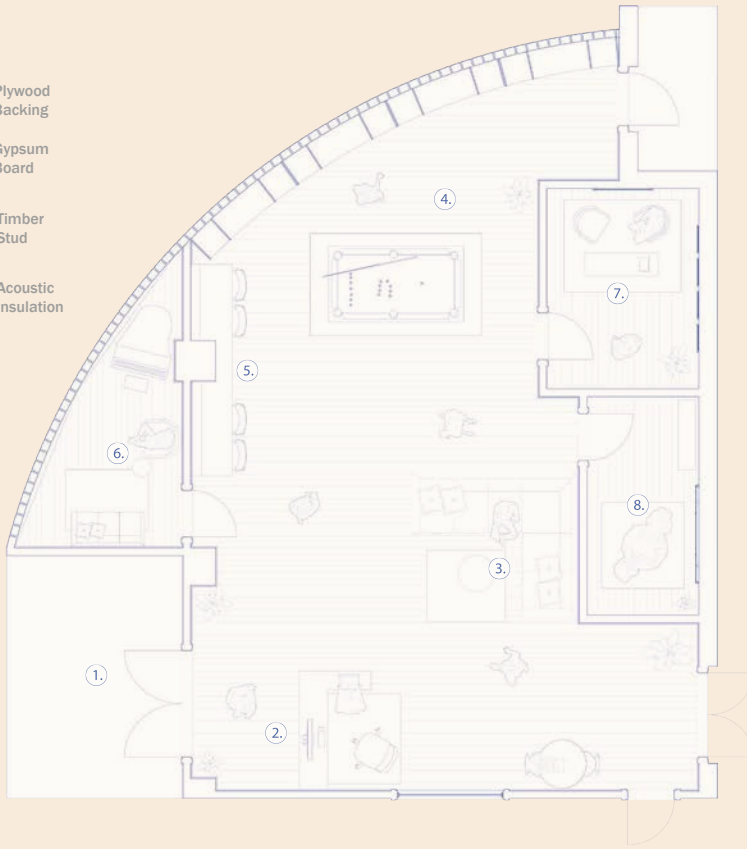
"We need places to store our clothes and bags."

Final Outcomes



1:20 New Soundproof Wall

1. Front Entrance
2. Reception Desk
3. Chill Out Zone
4. Games Area
5. Art Corner
6. Music Room
7. Counseling Room
8. Multi functional Room



1:50 Floor Plan @A3

Music Room Interior



Counseling Room Interior



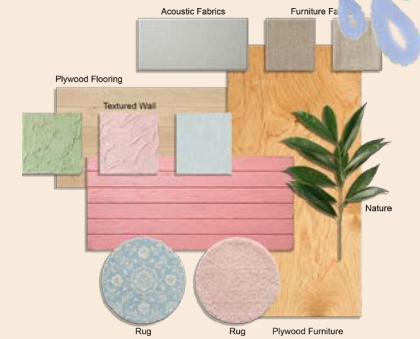
Final Outcomes



Axometric of Interior Space



1:10 Physical Model-
A physical model of the bespoke furniture was created to show how the space will be used, providing seating, bag storage, and other requested features from the engagement sessions.



Material Palette

Reflection

Working on the TalkShop project has been a valuable and rewarding experience that highlighted the importance of collaboration, communication, and community led design. Throughout the project, we worked closely as a multidisciplinary team, combining ideas and skills from different year groups and courses to create proposals that responded meaningfully to the needs of the young people who use the space.

One of the most important aspects of the project was engaging directly with the users of TalkShop. Speaking with young people, listening to their experiences, and involving them in workshops allowed us to better understand how the environment affects their wellbeing and sense of belonging. Their feedback shaped many of our key design decisions, from creating more welcoming social spaces to improving the entrance identity and introducing flexible furniture and activity areas.

The project also strengthened our understanding of how architecture and design can have a positive social impact beyond aesthetics alone. Rather than designing purely from our own assumptions, we learnt the value of participation, adaptability, and designing with people rather than for them. Working with Ben Atha and the TalkShop team further reinforced the importance of collaboration with external partners and responding to real-world challenges through thoughtful and inclusive design solutions.

Overall, the TalkShop project has been an insightful experience that allowed us to develop teamwork, communication, and creative problem-solving skills while contributing towards a meaningful community initiative. We hope our proposals help support TalkShop's vision of creating a more vibrant, inclusive, and welcoming environment for young people across Trafford.



Visual of Interior Main Space

PROJECT RECAP

1 Week 1 | Feb 3rd



Getting to know each other

The initial week revolved around getting to know each other and rejuvenating the Talkshop, a youth centre for ages 11-19 through producing a poster. We also met up with the collaborator Ben Atha, a Young People's Worker at Trafford Council, who works with the Talkshop.



Meeting the collaborator

2 Week 2 | Feb 17th



Working together to meet deadlines

Then we started to finish off the last few details of our group poster, planning out the groups budget, risk assessment, timeline and ethics. We divided the tasks mutually by breaking into groups of 2-3.

During this session, we found it challenging to develop a timeline. Most of us have limited experience in project management, we solved this by brainstorming ideas as a group to ensure that deadlines and tasks aren't overlooked.

3 Week 3 | March 3rd



Dealing with challenges

4 Week 4 | March 17th



Visiting the site for the first time

We met up with the collaborator to discuss ideas for the workshop activity and design. We went to the site in person so that we could get a sense of the space. It allowed us to refine our ideas and plan for our next steps to making a model of the interior space.



Making a model before workshop activity at Talkshop

5 Week 5 | April 21st



User engagement workshop

User engagement was a central part of our project. We gave a brief explanation of what Talkshop is about. We hosted a workshop that consisted of editing and redesigning the original floor plan and then added sticky notes to the model to visualise how the space would look with the youth's creative ideas.

6 Week 6 | May 11th



Action Week

Our intensive week began with sharing our work amongst us and understanding how many tasks were still unfinished like the digital model, renders and the interior space of the site. Once outputs were complete, we ran through the publication and highlighted what needed to be complete. The day after, we focused on redesigning the interior space and producing a model that presents the furniture that we made for the space. After yesterday's session, we focused on completing publication and the powerpoint as preparation for our presentation on the last day.



ABOUT

Each year the MSA LIVE programme unites Masters Architecture year 1, Masters of Architecture & Adaptive Resuse students, BA foundation and year 1 and Masters Landscape Architecture 1 in mixed-year teams to undertake live projects with external partners to create social impact.

LIVE PROJECTS

All MSA LIVE projects are live. A live project is where an educational organisation and an external partner develop a brief, timescale, and outcome for their mutual benefit.

SOCIAL IMPACT

All MSA LIVE projects are for community benefit or have social impact. Social impact is the effect an organization's actions have on the well-being of a community. Our agendas are set by our external collaborators.

EXTERNAL PARTNERS

MSA LIVE projects work with many organisations: charities, community groups, social enterprises, community

interest companies, researchers, practitioners and educators.

STUDENT-LED

Our MSA students take the lead in the project conception, brief development, delivery and co-ordination of a small project. The projects are celebrated in presentations at the end of the academic year. .

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

Working in teams within and across year groups and courses; MSA students participate in peer to peer learning. In addition, collaborators, participants and students engage in the transfer of tangible and intellectual property, expertise, learning and skills.

LARGE SCALE

This year approximately 400 students from 5 cohorts in MSA have worked on 34 projects with partners.

QUESTIONS

For questions about MSA LIVE please contact the MSA LIVE team, Emily & Julie:

e.crompton@mmu.ac.uk and
j.fitzpatrick@mmu.ac.uk



BLOG

live.msa.ac.uk/2026

SOCIAL

#MSALive26
[@msa.live.26](https://twitter.com/msa.live.26)
[@TheMSArch](https://www.instagram.com/TheMSArch)

WEBSITE

www.msa.ac.uk

