

The Catkin Centre and Sunflower House

Location: Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Liverpool, UK

Client: Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust

Dates of involvement: 2018 - 2023

Size: 4,445sqm

Awards: Design in Mental Health Awards Project of the Year Finalist

"The children and families who will use the new cluster development deserve a fantastic place in which to receive their assessment and treatment. The brilliant staff who provide their services are equally deserving. The Cullinan team have understood this and responded magnificently with a building of quality and imagination."

David Powell, Development Director, Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust



Increasing evidence shows that contact with nature, particularly for those living in urban environments, improves health, reduces stress and enhances quality of life, and it has proven outcomes for the recovery of those with mental health or behavioural issues. Alder Hey will be the first children's hospital in Europe to be integrated within a new park – creating a 21st century Health Campus as a possible blueprint for the future of the NHS.

The Catkin Centre and Sunflower House stand as an innovative, joined-up approach to the treatment of physical and mental health for children and young adults, bringing together CAMHS, Psychology, Paediatric Neuro-Assessment and Orthotic departments, along with a residential care building. These facilities, previously scattered across the hospital site and the city, now form a crucible for mental healthcare excellence.

Cloistered routes surround two courtyard buildings, where clusters of consulting rooms, bedrooms and day spaces are gathered around an outdoor room - a garden offering activities, views, daylight and fresh air. An environment that is warm and welcoming, homely and connected to nature; for a sense of restorative tranquillity.

Internally the building is made of timber, revealed and expressed throughout, chosen for its warmth, smell and feel, and its environmental and wellbeing benefits.



The buildings are designed around a central garden; a multi-sensory experience for full engagement with the landscape to promote wellbeing. A range of spaces from large scale arrival areas to more intimate, calmer spaces important for mental wellbeing, will enable the visitor to have control of their environment to suit their needs.