

A person wearing a black sensory vest is sitting in a room with a large digital screen displaying a forest landscape. The room is illuminated with green light from the ceiling. The person is looking up and smiling.

Sensory Environments

interactive | immersive | inclusive

Recipe for a sensory room

What makes a room, a sensory room?

At Sensory Guru, we define a Sensory Room as a space where multi-modal sensory stimulation can be dialed up and down to suit the sensory profile of users.

In practice this means a controlled space where you can enhance auditory experiences for those with a hearing impairment, increase or decrease visual experiences for those with visual impairments, or visual hypersensitivity, etc.

We pride ourselves on designing unique, bespoke spaces that are tailored to suit the needs of individual participants — whilst being inclusive for all.

Our ethos is that Sensory Spaces should be safe, fun and engaging environments — that are outcome driven.

We love collaborating with clients that enable us to work beyond the confines of the catalogue, push the boundaries and create tailored spaces that will have real benefits for end users. Got something in mind? Give us a call!



"Crucially, we aim to create spaces that enable individuals to learn transferable skills, which can benefit them outside of the sensory room and translate to other experiences and environments"

Chloe Harwood, Sensory Guru

planning is key



Good planning is the foundation of all great Sensory Rooms.

Creating a Sensory Room is not a task to be taken lightly. Gone are the days when a few blinking lights and loud sounds blasted at intervals was acceptable. Today, the choices for those designing a sensory space are endless and should no longer result in a passive experience for the user.

Participants should be able to use the space to learn and play in completely tailored ways that give them full access and control.

The team at Sensory Guru have designed and installed hundreds of Sensory Rooms, Immersive Spaces and Interactive Learning Environments, and in our experience, customers that consult with our design team and plan the project to meet the specific needs of their users, achieve the best results!

Knowing where to begin and what to consider is the difference between a space that simply looks good, and a space that looks good, functions well and stands the test of time.

Meeting needs



Chloe Harwood, Project Design Manager at Sensory Guru, says: "It is essential sensory spaces are built with the end-user in mind. Experiences should be tangible for users and pitched at a level that each individual user can understand and engage with."

Before planning a sensory space or immersive room consider:



- Needs and required outcomes ✓
- Access method and control ✓
- Suitability of equipment for specific needs ✓
- Sensory thresholds (dialing up/down) ✓
- Application: learning, therapy, play, relaxation ✓
- User ratios - 1:1 and groups ✓
- Technical knowledge required to use the equipment ✓
- Support, training and after sales care options ✓
- Future proofing ✓

Outcomes

Sensory Rooms should be planned with the outcomes and learning benefits that you want to achieve in mind. Whether it is to learn, relax, or play, without an identified outcome for the user, the space will become an expensive novelty that will quickly tire.

Do you want to improve social skills and improve group interaction? Do you want to encourage movement and improve coordination, balance and spatial awareness? When planning a Sensory Room, all the components should be relevant for the users and related to outcomes and goals.

Access



To get the most out of a Sensory Room, users need to be able to access and control the space. This means it is essential that the design incorporates the unique access and control methods of the user.

An individual in a wheelchair with little movement ability, will need to use the space in a completely different way to a person with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Yet, both of these needs must be incorporated into the design of the Sensory Space.

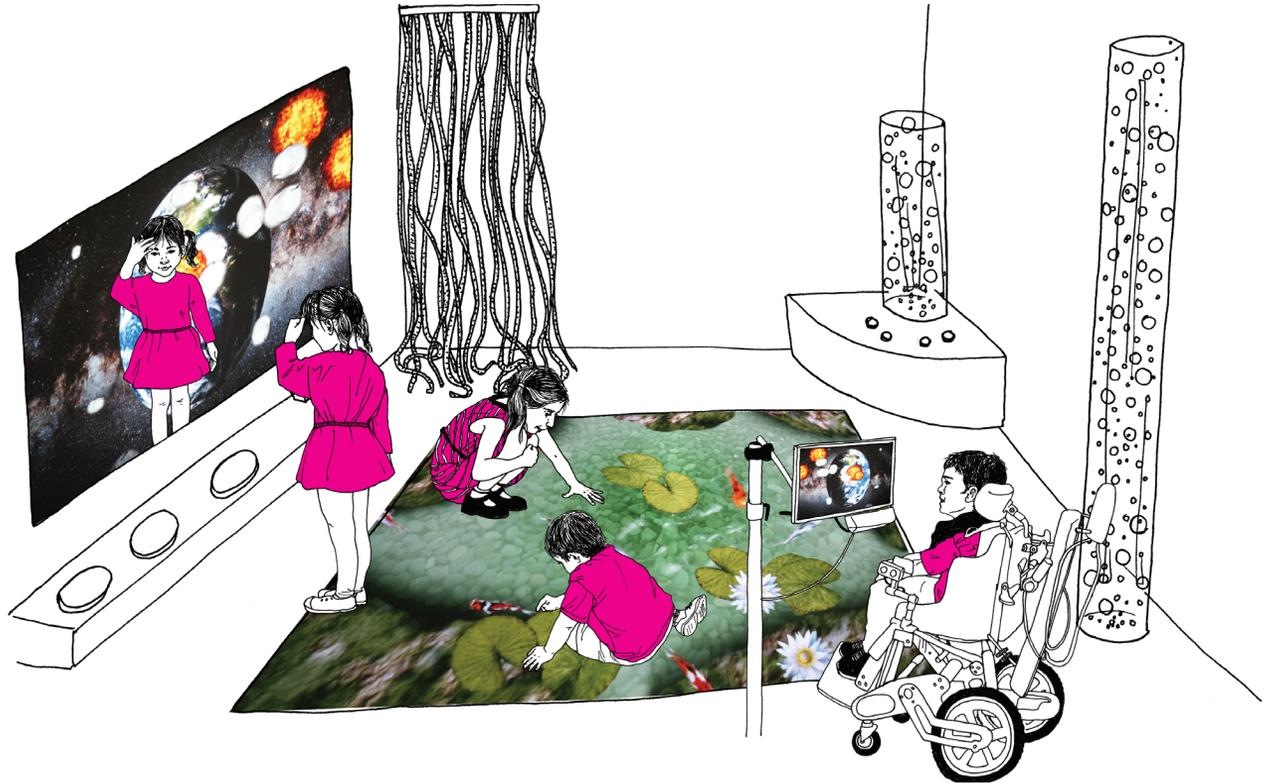
At Sensory Guru, we ensure that the products that we specify can be accessed and controlled through individual user's dominant means of accessing the technology; whether it be through Eye Gaze, Switches or Gesture, in order to create a truly inclusive space.



For example, eye gaze users with limited mobility love to use Magic Carpet, as the system enables them to interact and play games with their peers. The device has hundreds of different applications and themes that the user can choose to access, providing them with the opportunity to lead sessions within the Sensory Room and make decisions as to how they want to use the space.

"sensory guru inspired us to be a little different and think beyond the norm. They took time to listen to what we wanted to achieve and to respond to the individual requirements that we had. The result is an amazing space that encourages the children to be creative and never fails to delight." Laura sercombe - Chief Executive of Challenger's Disability

what do you see?



#communication #Motorskills #Relaxation #Executivefunction #causeandeffect #sensoryprocessing #Memory
#body awareness #turn taking #spatial awareness #Play #touch #natural interaction #eye gaze
#exploration #learning #collaboration #fun #engagement #inclusion #multi-sensory stimulation

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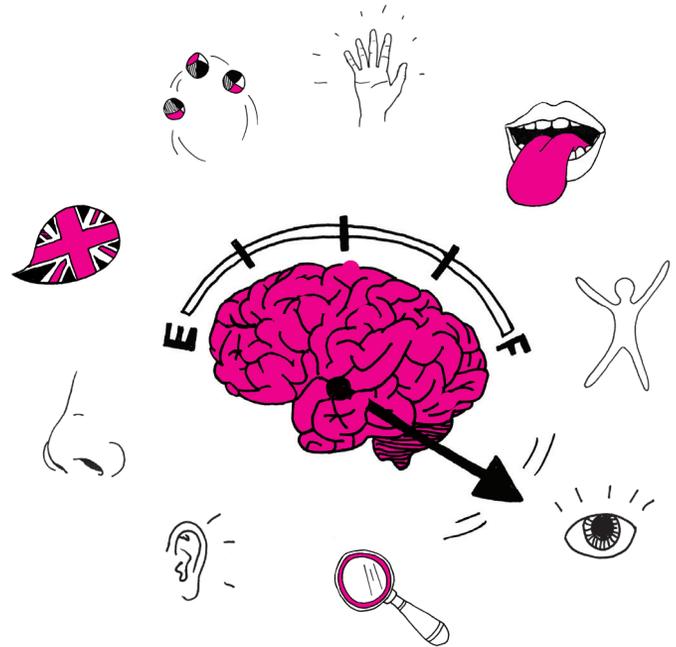
Designing for the senses

Technology offers us opportunities to create infinite sensory experiences that can be tailored to users specific individual learning outcomes and needs. Our spaces utilise the latest innovations in interactive technology to provide stunning user experiences.

To achieve this, it is important to build an in-depth understanding of the user, encompassing their likes, dislikes, response points, behavioural norms and sensory thresholds. When we have detailed understanding of the sensory profile of the user, we can build new experiences from the ground up, one sense at a time.

When this is done correctly, it enables us to reach beyond simple aesthetics to make impact on cognitive and emotional levels. We can also build and layer the sensory stimulation users receive, in a safe, measured and controlled form.

This enables us to test the user's sensory boundaries and develop their sensory thresholds, in a safe and controlled environment.



Beyond the bubble tube



Over the year's sensory companies have created a tick box methodology for what should be included in a Sensory Room. Staff tend to reel off a list of items such as Bubble Tube, Fibre Optics, Coloured Lights, Projector Wheels, etc. There is nothing wrong with this approach, but it assumes that all sensory needs can be met with these customary items.

At Sensory Guru, we believe in utilising the latest technology to help to re-imagine how users interact with the world around them.

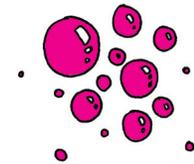
Immersion can be a fantastic tool for engaging pupils and facilitating a sensory journey. For example, projectors can help to create awe inspiring, panoramic scenes that transport users to the depths of space where magical stars and asteroids whizz by.

Interactive elements, like switches and gesture, can also be integrated to enable users to manipulate the whole of the environment, such as by changing the projected images, sounds, or tactile sensations. This gives them complete control and immersion within the space.

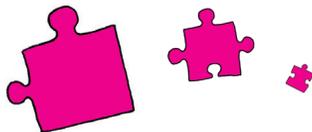
A vibro-acoustic platform could even be linked to the system, so that as interactions occur, the platform will resonate in unison. This would mean that if the user causes an asteroid to explode in space, they will see, hear and feel the explosion take place. This provides users with higher sensory thresholds greater sensory stimulation — although it is not suitable for all users.

For this reason, we use versatile products that can easily be scaled up and down by staff to suit the sensory thresholds of individual participants.

Most importantly, we believe personalisation is the key to providing meaningful user experiences, which is why we develop technology that is extensible and designed to accommodate content changes.



How can sensory environments benefit users?



Complex Needs

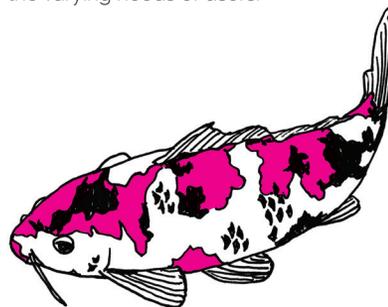
Sensory environments for people with complex needs should be accessible through a variety of access methods and incorporate equipment that allows users to make choices, inspires independence and enables them to learn as they explore.

Magic Mirror is a motion detection system that projects apps onto walls and enables users to see themselves within the projection. It can be triggered through very slight movements — or can be used to encourage bigger movements and gestures. This means it is easily scalable to the needs of different users.

It provides a valuable tool to grow participants' confidence, by allowing them to control sounds and images within their own physical capabilities. Staff can move and scale target objects in real time, allowing them to cater to different user needs. For example, a user with very little mobility can use fine movements to pop a floating bubble. While users with greater mobility can be challenged to use bigger movements, and reach higher and wider to pop the floating objects.

This helps to develop users motor skills, hand eye co-ordination and proprioception (the body's ability to know where its limbs are in space without having to look).

Incorporating the Magic Mirror system into design also provides a great opportunity to promote group interaction and build social skills, as apps like music band, enable one user to play the drums, while another commands bass and a third performs on guitar. Magic Mirror and Magic Carpet systems can also both be used with Eye Gaze and other access methods, which means that they are inclusive for the varying needs of users.



Autism



When designing a Sensory Environment for autistic users, creating a customisable space, with versatile, scalable equipment that can provide the right filters and interventions, is crucial to ensure users do not experience sensory overload, as this can lead them to withdraw or exhibit challenging behaviour.

Localised tactile, aroma and taste experiences allow a sensory stimuli to be introduced at a level comfortable to the user's sensory threshold. If a localised stimuli is too much, it can easily be scaled back. Slowly exposing users to sensory stimuli in this way can help to improve their tolerance to sensory stimulation and enhance sensory thresholds.

Similarly, content based systems like Magic Carpet offer a variety of personalisation options and allow facilitators to make apps that will be tailored individual requirements. Magic Carpet can be used in conjunction with Sensory Integration equipment like body rollers, vibrating platforms, and cuddle swings to provide visual, auditory and tactile feedback.

Dementia



For dementia patients we aim to create a space that can help to keep an individual stimulated to maintain cognitive function and reduce the feeling of isolation, boredom and frustration that can lead to negative behaviours.

Familiarity is also important when creating the Sensory Space. This means incorporating textiles and every day, personal objects. Magic Carpet enables users to upload and interact with photos and videos, which can help to bring times gone by, back to the present day. In addition, Magic Carpet has hundreds of pre-made apps designed to stimulate and engage dementia patients.

Stimulating the senses through smell, taste and vision can assist in awakening memories. For example, providing users with fish and chips to eat, will evoke the sense of taste and smell. A smell set could also create the aroma of sea water permeating the air and pictures of the seaside could be projected into the walls. This may help to stimulate users' memories of holidays to the seaside, which may improve mood, help with communication and keep their brain active.

what our clients say!



Sensory Guru has designed and installed hundreds of innovative interactive spaces for clients in the UK. We are a leading supplier of interactive and assistive technology for education and healthcare markets. We pride ourselves on the reputation we have achieved for excellence and will do whatever we can to create inspiring, life enhancing products and environments for our customers.

@GOSH @Guys&St.Thomas! @LeonardCheshire
@Lifelites @sense @scope @RNIB @RNID
@MuscularDystrophyUK @MENCAP @MNDA
@Helen&DouglasHouse @CharlieHeritage
@St.Josephs @ARCOS @MacIntyreCharity
@PercyHedley @HazelCourtSchool @Norwood
@KentCountyCouncil @GarwoodFoundation
@children'strust @WillowBanksEN
@children'strust - and all of the other great
people and organisations we have been so
fortunate to work with since 2009



"The sensory room can be very child specific and yet works for all children! Even for those who can't move, they can really control their activity by directing a team member. The child is boss: it gives them total control!"

Kathy Patcham, Manager, Helen & Douglas



"One of the best things about Sensory Guru is everyone is friendly and very personable. They are looking to tailor their equipment and what they devise to what we need. They are really invested in helping us, to help the children learn."

Carol Willard, Head Teacher, New Vision School



"Sensory Guru's approach is highly individual and helps us understand every little detail so we can tailor it to the children's needs!"

Sylvia Kerambrum - Head Teacher



"Sensory Guru are rewriting the book when it comes to sensory environments and personalisation."

Janis Thompson - Care Director



Sensory Guru & you!

We love nothing more than to sit down with a customer and help them design a space that will meet the needs of their users. Our design team has created hundreds of stunning, versatile spaces that meet the needs of people of all ages and abilities. If you are considering creating a space, or would simply like to talk through ideas to get an understanding of what is possible, contact us and we will be happy to advise.

Design process



stage 1: consultation

We will meet with you on-site to discuss your design requirements and view your space



stage 2: collaboration

Next, we will invite you to collaborate with us via Skype or Team Viewer on our online design system



stage 3: refine

We will refine the project design to reflect your input and provide a quotation for the finalised project



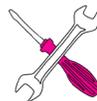
stage 4: Acceptance

We will send you a comprehensive design proposal detailing all aspects of your project



stage 5: realisation

Expert installers will come out and install the project to your satisfaction and provide instruction on how to get started



stage 6: After sales care

We will visit you to provide instruction on the technical operation of the equipment and help tailor to individual needs - thereafter you can access regular refresher training days and customer only events

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