

RSA

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'DESIGNER TARGETS PRISON VISITS AS A MEANS OF REDUCING RE-OFFENDING

Friday May 8th

A young designer from Middlesex University has won a prestigious RSA Design Directions award for her package of proposals on how prisons might improve the chances of offenders receiving regular, positive visits from friends and family.

Georgia Stylianou, who submitted her ideas to the RSA in January 2009, began by considering the role of the prison visit and the importance of maintaining family ties in relation to the rehabilitation process.

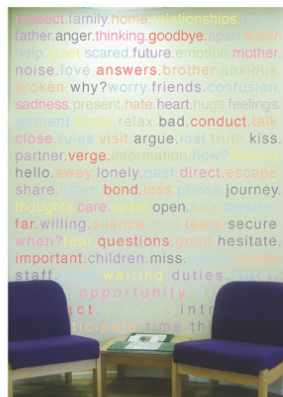
With research demonstrating that regular, positive visits can make a constructive contribution to lowering re-offending levels, Georgia focussed on what might encourage visits to happen and which barriers needed to be addressed.

Georgia's discovered that often the initial encounters, both human and environmental, can set the tone and influence the experience of the whole visit. Targeting this early part of the visit process she identified key touchpoints where small improvements could be made.

Submitting her ideas to the Design Directions competition, the RSA's judging panel considered that Georgia's ideas would serve to alleviate anxiety about prison visits and provide an environment in which a visitor would consider returning.

Wall of Words

RSA | The Visit



A wall consisting of emotive words...

- People often find it hard to open up about their **feelings** - perhaps do not even know how they feel
- Wall provokes **thought**
- Creates a **focus point** for the room
- Serves as a **conversation** starter for :
 - visitor-to-visitor
 - visitor-to-officer
 - visitor-to-prisoner
- **Variations** of Wall of Words may be repeated throughout prison e.g in the **Visiting Hall**

Commenting on the winning entry, the RSA's Head of Design, Emily Campbell said:

"Georgia Stylianou's solution is all about creating an environment that is legible to visitors rather than blank and alienating. Like all RSA design award winners, she's really wrestled and

prevailed in addressing a very difficult problem and we're proud to recognise her achievement."

Georgia's produced a package of ideas which defined small changes that would contribute to making a big difference. These included:

- clear and welcoming signage and way-finding system
- signage that takes account of non-English speakers and others with literacy problems
- TV display screens outlining various procedures, including security checks, to reduce fear and anxiety
- a 'wall of words' in the waiting area to reflect the mixed emotions of visitors, not always easily expressed, that would also help to clarify thoughts and stimulate conversation
- a more informal, friendly badging system for officers, to reduce the sense of intimidation
- clearly defined spaces in the waiting area including a space for form-filling and confidential Q&A with volunteer helpers

Notes to Editors

- 1. For more information contact Luke Robinson, RSA Head of Media on 020 7451 6893 or luke.robinson@rsa.org.uk**
- 2. A full list of the Design Directions award winners can be found at www.rsadesigndirections.org**
- 3. The RSA developed this project with support from Kalyx**
4. Design Directions is the RSA's annual design awards in which students are challenged to address intractable social problems through innovative new design.
5. Design Directions is the UK's leading competition for 'socially responsible' design. The RSA established its first awards scheme for students in 1924 and today this unique scheme identifies, supports and rewards the most promising and creative students.
6. Worth over £60,000 in prize monies, comprising cash and work placements, the awards provide financial and practical assistance to student designers starting out in their careers.
7. This year Design Directions received 800+ entrants. There were 30 winners. There was a choice of 11 briefs to which students could respond, proposing solutions to ways in which design could make useful and meaningful interventions in a variety of situations.
8. The RSA is grateful to the following organisations who supported Design Directions in 2008/09: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation; Garfield Weston Foundation; Kalyx; GlaxoSmithKline; Royal Mail; Home Office; Design Council; Forum for the Future; The Worshipful Company of Tin Plate Workers; Engine Service Design; CIM Charitable Trust; Aircraft Medical; Design against crime research centre; Springetts; Waitrose; NCR; Wolff Olins