

Long-Lasting Building Services Key to Best Use of New Healthcare Funding

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As construction firms are preparing to vie for £2.5bn of work under the programme, a survey from polymer supplier REHAU, queried 520 M&E contractors and architects on key issues affecting building design has been published.

Of the 25% of respondents working in the healthcare sector, 98% said they would be willing to pay extra for products with longer lifespans when constructing healthcare facilities.

Titled Designing Healthy Healthcare, the new guide explores the challenges and opportunities for contractors and specifiers involved in the construction of healthcare environments, including hospitals, doctors' surgeries and care homes. Alongside looking at how a patient-centric approach to selecting solutions can improve health outcomes, the new whitepaper also explores technologies that can help the sector tackle future challenges like climate change.

"This additional hospital construction funding is clearly welcome news, but as with all grants, using this funding as wisely as possible will be key," explains Steve Richmond, Head of Marketing and Technical at REHAU Building Solutions UK. "All sectors are under significant pressure to decarbonise, but in healthcare, where built assets must meet rigorous standards to assure patient wellbeing, doing so effectively may prove more challenging.

"Yet with existing estates continuing to age alongside the general population, new, high-quality building services will be required to create facilities fit for the future. As our report's findings show, the fact this must be done while ensuring a traditionally carbon-intensive sector meets net zero standards further demonstrates why quality, not cost, must be an overriding priority when specifying solutions."

The report is the last in REHAU's Designing Healthy series, exploring how building services can improve

new and existing commercial building design and occupant health. Each whitepaper looks at different sectors, including multiple-occupancy housing, hospitality and education, and best practice for contractors and specifiers looking to futureproof structures while increasing overall comfort.

As such, the fear of cost-cutting measures is emphasised in the new whitepaper, with 76% of those surveyed suggesting that occupant wellbeing is 'value-engineered' out of a building's design later in the project. Specifically, 44% of respondents said this 'often' happened, with 32% saying it 'always' happens.

"These survey findings make for troubling reading, especially at a time when we are looking build back following the worst of the pandemic," concludes Steve. "When considered alongside 70% also stating they believe the average lifespan of M&E solutions in healthcare sector needed to improve, it is possible to reach very firm conclusions.

"Namely, there is clear desire to equip facilities with better systems and services for key utilities such as water and heating, and this new funding offers a clear opportunity to do so. The near future will likely be transformational for the UK's health services, so now is an ideal time to reset the course and improve new and existing stock. Polymer products, provided by suppliers such as REHAU, represent an effective way of doing this."

[For more information and to read REHAU's guide, Designing Healthy Healthcare, please click here.](#)