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Supporting Infection Prevention and Control Through the 'Right' Flooring Specification.

By Chris Pursey, Gerflor Healthcare Key Account Manager.

In today's complex healthcare environment, NHS specifiers benefit from partnering with trusted suppliers who supply compliant, fit-for-purpose products, alongside deep expertise and ongoing support. This collaboration ensures confidence and long term-value for healthcare stakeholders.

In infection-sensitive environments like hospitals and other healthcare facilities, the correct flooring specification can make a significant contribution to any Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) strategy.

While floors have traditionally been overlooked in the context of environmental contamination, particularly compared to high-touch surfaces, evidence now suggests they may play a far greater role in the spread of pathogens than once thought.

Studies have shown that floors can act as a reservoir for microorganisms, with pathogens potentially transferred from floor to surface through air movement, staff footwear, or equipment wheels. This emerging understanding underscores the importance of choosing flooring materials that actively support infection control protocols.

More Than a Cleaning Protocol

Effective IPC starts with the materials chosen during specification. In clinical environments, from general wards to theatres, floorcoverings play a pivotal role in supporting hygiene, safety, and ease of maintenance. A properly specified flooring system can help minimise the spread of germs and bacteria, simplify ongoing cleaning, and contribute to a calming, clinically appropriate atmosphere for patients and staff.

Seamless Transitions Closing the Gaps

Corners and transitions are often weak points in healthcare interiors, creating areas that are notoriously hard to clean and prone to deterioration. Dirt and moisture can accumulate in these spaces, increasing the risk of contamination. For this reason, NHS specifiers are increasingly opting for integrated wall and floor systems with self-coved skirtings and clean corner solutions.

Seamless, non-porous flooring, such as sheet vinyl or linoleum can be heat welded at the seams, producing a continuous surface that eliminates gaps where pathogens might thrive. These materials can also be covered up the wall to create a smooth, rounded transition that's easy to clean and resistant to wear.

With Compliments:
Gemma Beech
The Studio 4
Grosvenor House
Central Park
Telford
TF2 9TW
Tel: 01952 234 005
Email: pr@thestudio4.co.uk

Issued on behalf of:
Navjot Dhillon
Gerflor Flooring UK Limited
Park Green
Macclesfield
Cheshire
SK11 7LZ
Tel: 01625 428 922
Email: contractuk@gerflor.com

Supporting Clean Air as Well as Clean Surfaces

While much IPC guidance focuses on surface hygiene, airborne contaminants also pose a threat in healthcare environments. Some flooring materials, such as high-quality vinyl and rubber, contribute to better indoor air quality by minimising dust and allergen accumulation. Their smooth, dense surfaces reduce particle build-up, which supports overall cleanliness when paired with appropriate ventilation systems.

Built-in Antimicrobial Protection

Many modern commercial flooring solutions are now manufactured with antimicrobial additives that inhibit the growth of bacteria and fungi. In high-risk areas like operating theatres, isolation rooms, and treatment bays, this additional layer of protection can be crucial. By choosing flooring with integrated antimicrobial properties, NHS facilities can further reduce the risk of healthcare-associated infections (HCAIs).

Durability and Daily Demands

Healthcare flooring must withstand constant foot traffic, heavy rolling loads, and frequent exposure to harsh cleaning agents. Materials such as resilient sheet flooring are designed to cope with these daily demands, offering both strength and cleanability.

Importantly for IPC teams, these floors are also resistant to chemicals and stains, including those found in commonly used disinfectants and sanitisers. Their ability to endure repeated cleaning without degrading helps maintain hygiene standards while reducing maintenance costs over time.

Flooring That Performs Where It Matters

The clinical environment places intense demands on materials, from burns units and pharmacies to general wards and outpatient departments. Flooring must not only meet infection control standards but also remain intact, impermeable, and easy to clean across its lifespan. Key features NHS specifiers should look for include:

- Non-porous surfaces to prevent the absorption of liquids and pathogens
- Seamless installation for a continuous, hygienic finish
- Chemical and stain resistance to withstand regular cleaning
- Slip resistance for improved safety underfoot

Adapting to the Evolving Healthcare Landscape

Post-COVID, IPC has become an even greater focus across the NHS. It is essential that infection prevention extends beyond protocol and practice to include material choice. Specifying the right flooring is one of the most practical and proactive decisions that specifiers and estates teams can make to protect patients, staff, and visitors.

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Walls and floors that are difficult to clean or prone to damage can harbour bacteria and increase infection risks, especially for patients with compromised immune systems. Flooring with antimicrobial treatments, sealed joints, and coved edges is no longer a 'nice to have' - it's a clinical necessity.

Conclusion

Ultimately, infection prevention isn't just about keeping facilities looking clean, it's about creating environments that are resilient to contamination, easy to maintain, and supportive of wider hygiene strategies. By working with experienced suppliers and selecting proven flooring systems tailored for the healthcare sector, NHS specifiers can help ensure their facilities remain safe, efficient, and infection-free.

Need Support Choosing the Right Solution?

For tailored advice on healthcare flooring specification, contact [Chris Pursey | LinkedIn](#) or visit gerflor.co.uk or gerflor.ie for further information.

Contact Us

For further information on flooring, wall protection, and interior solutions for Infection Control and Prevention speak to the experts at Gerflor and Gradus. Our solutions help deliver environments where patients, staff, and visitors can thrive.

Gerflor Flooring
Visit: gerflor.co.uk
Tel: 01625 428 922
Email: contractuk@gerflor.com

Gradus Accessories
Visit: gradus.com
Tel: 01625 428 922
Email: imail@gradus.com

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