



The Government is allocating unprecedented funds (in recent years) for a new generation of buildings across all scales within the NHS. What does this mean for design, and what does it mean for sustainability?
Susan Francis,
architectural advisor to the Future Healthcare Network, writes on how new thinking is aiming to ensure good design within healthcare

The Pulross Intermediate Care Centre, Brixton, London. Opened 2000. Architects Penoyre & Prasad

Prognosis for a newbuild NHS

The Government has embarked upon the largest healthcare building programme for a generation, aiming to build over one hundred new hospitals by 2010. So far, about one third have been completed, around fifty are being developed and more are expected to be announced in the near future. What can we expect? And how much are we doing to ensure that the designs are good quality?

Therapeutic environment

The notion that the environment contributes to healing is not new, Florence Nightingale alluded to it in her 'Notes on Hospitals' over a hundred years ago when she set out her preferred ward dimensions, which became a standard design until the mid twentieth century. There

is research evidence from scientific control trials and social science methods to demonstrate what environmental variables affect patient health outcomes and levels of satisfaction for staff and patients. Plenty of anecdotes, and common sense, add to the growing understanding of how the design of healthcare environments can provide patient comfort and control, improve staff morale, recruitment and retention, and make a building people generally feel proud of. But how does this theoretical understanding of the issues relate to the practical process of making new buildings?

The case for investing in good design

The Future Healthcare Network (FHN) is supporting these developments through a learning network for