

NEWS AND INTELLIGENCE FOR CARE HOME OWNERS AND OPERATIONS DIRECTORS

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INVESTMENT

WHERE ARE THE BEST RETURNS FOR PRUDENT CARE HOME OPERATORS?

RESEARCH

LAIN GBLISSON PUBLISHES ITS ANNUAL STATE OF THE HEALTHCARE NATION REPORT

CARE HOME INTERIORS

MODERN FLOORS ARE MORE STYLISH AND SAFE THAN EVER BEFORE

PUBLIC POLICY

REPUBLICA RECOMMENDS GOVERNMENT CREATES A SPECIAL FUND TO PREVENT BED BLOCKING

SIGNATURE STYLE

AIDAN ROCHE REVEALS HOW HE BUILT THE UK'S MOST LUXURIOUS CARE AND ASSISTED LIVING HOMES BUSINESS IN JUST 10 YEARS.



FLOORED

THE DAYS WHEN RESIDENTS ENDURED ENDLESS ACRES OF PALE BLUE VINYL FLOORS THROUGHOUT THEIR **CARE HOMES** ARE, THANKFULLY, FADING INTO HISTORY. OPERATORS TODAY ARE STRIVING IN ALL AREAS OF THE HOME TO BE LESS CLINICAL AND MORE STYLISH, AND THEIR CHOICE OF FLOORING IS NO EXCEPTION. THANKFULLY, SUPPLIERS ARE INNOVATING LIKE NEVER BEFORE WITH NEW MATERIALS, COLOURS, TEXTURES, PATTERNS AND EVEN SMART **TECHNOLOGY OPTIONS**, AS ROB CORDER DISCOVERS IN AN INVESTIGATION INTO CURRENT **FLOORING TRENDS**.



John Mellor, Polyflor's marketing manager for safety flooring.

The outcome of all this innovation is a bewildering range of choices for care home operators, their architects and contractors. Most importantly, this means that care homes can use many types of flooring in different parts of a property – ranging from bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchens and community areas like restaurants and day rooms.

The first choice for any space is between vinyl and carpet, and *Care Home Professional* spoke to experts from both camps to see whether they could convince operators to choose sides. The answer, not surprisingly, is that care homes can and should incorporate both.

Kicking off the case in favour of vinyl is Karndean Designflooring, a global supplier of commercial and residential luxury vinyl tile (LVT) flooring. Matthew Speck, head of commercial sales in the UK, says care homes have never had it so good. “Whereas before care homes have felt restricted in their choices, designers can now look to incorporate zoning, sweeping curves,

rug effects and borders around key areas to add interest and guide residents around spaces. This can be easily achieved with LVT and there really are no limits,” he says.

“There’s been a real trend of late with operators, architects and designers looking to LVT in place of traditional laminate or sheet vinyl for its durabil-



Matthew Speck, head of commercial sales at Karndean Designflooring.

There have been massive advances in the technical specification of flooring solutions in recent years, as suppliers improve the look and feel of their products while maintaining and even improving their durability, safety and easiness to clean and maintain.



Wooden floor effects from Polyflor.

ity, ease of maintenance and endless design capabilities.

“It’s allowing the care home sector to achieve the desired look, with wood and stone effect planks and tiles, yet still maintain the key properties of

safety and practicality for the property,” he adds.

Polyflor’s marketing manager, John Mellor, agrees. The company offers vinyl in either sheets or tiles, and says that, while choice has never been great-

er, it is more important than ever for operators to know the facts about the effect of floors on residents.

“Flooring as well as other interior aspects, such as lighting and signage, is a key surface finish that can help promote a more positive and inclusive environment to those living with dementia and encourage reduced stress and anxiety levels,” explains Mr Mellor. “Flooring is an integral part of an interior space that can provide a homely, welcoming and non-institutional feel and if products are used that are matt in appearance without too many differing patterns or textures, for example, this can help reduce potential agitation for those living with dementia. If someone living with dementia feels more relaxed and comfortable because of the interior environment surrounding them, they are also less likely to be disorientated and potentially suffer a fall or accident.”

Polyflor has worked with The University of Salford to develop dementia-friendly flooring principles. They are

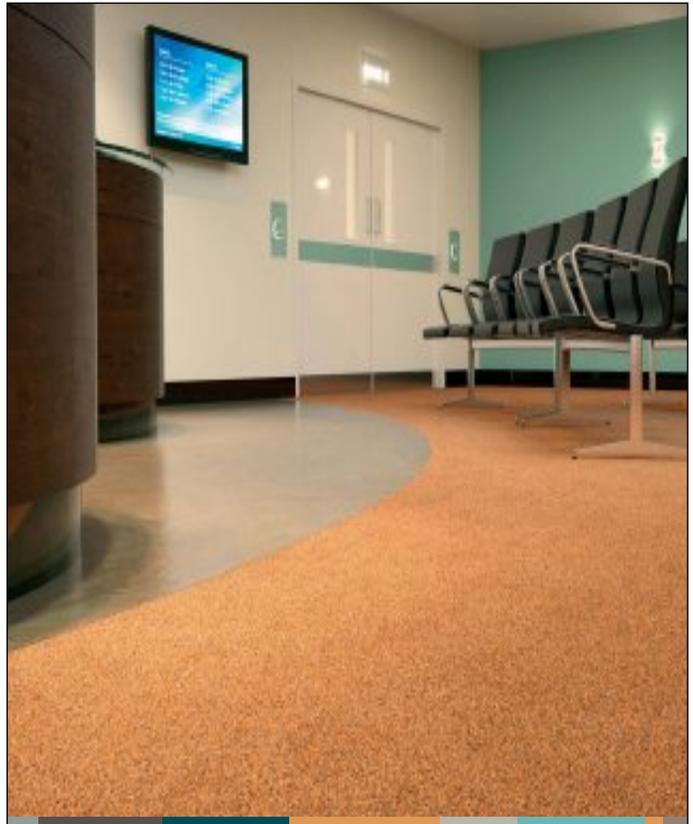


Catherine Helliker, marketing manager for danfloor.

described in detail in the company’s specialist care brochure (search online for Polyflor Specialist Care Brochure), but in brief are:

- Develop one continuous flooring surface
- Be careful with the use of tonal contrast
- Reduce impact sound
- Accentuate colours to give depth
- Avoid sensory overload and false steps
- Reduce sparkle
- Promote the use of a matt floor finish
- Blend flecks with the tone of the main floor surface
- Avoid unpleasant smells and odours
- Provide good transition between differing floor finishes

Polyflor’s research has fed into a range of vinyl flooring solutions for different parts of a care home. “For example our Polysafe Hydro Evolve safety flooring with a pimple emboss should be used for wet room areas, the enhanced slip resistant Polysafe Apex is designed for kitchen and food preparation areas and the high design Expona range of luxury vinyl tile flooring is ideal for front of house ar-



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SMART FLOORING CAN SAVE CARE HOMES TIME AND MONEY



Smart floors help to prevent falls, and assist management in learning from each incident.

Can smart technologies in care homes really help operators cut costs? We spoke to Palle Stevn from MariCare, manufacturers of ‘Elsi@ Smart Floors’, to find out more.

The sensitive subject of finances in healthcare is often fiercely debated. Investment towards achieving higher standards of care is undoubtedly of top priority to any healthcare establishment, but how to spend limited budgets can be a challenge. With an obligation to best fulfil a Duty of Care, utilising any option that can satisfy all parties must be considered.

Now, there might be an answer that can not only improve the quality of care, but also prove extremely cost-effective too: smart technologies. If the implementation of such technologies can help nurses and care staff to improve the lives of the infirm, whilst at the same

time providing a sizeable return on the initial investment, it instantly becomes a logical consideration for healthcare operators.

Palle Stevn is COO at MariCare – a Finnish company that has developed an innovative brand of ‘Smart Floor’ technology, the Elsi@ system, designed purposefully for use in the healthcare sector – from hospital wards and rehabilitation centres to nursing homes and hospices.

The MariCare Elsi@ system works through sensors built into the floor, which record how patients and residents navigate the building day-to-day. The immediate benefits are plentiful, from detecting when a patient has fallen over, to when they get out of bed and walk to the bathroom and thus, may require assistance.

All of these prompts are then communicated wirelessly to the nurses’ computers or smart devices, allowing them to monitor patients and act as and when required. Not only that, it helps them to learn patterns of behaviour and informs an understanding of how they can prevent any harm in the future.

But how can a ‘Smart Floor’ be seamlessly integrated into a facility without impacting existing procedures and protocols? Moreover, how can a floor cut costs for healthcare operators?

Perhaps the most sensitive challenge

care home operators face is the fear that any technological care enhancements might jeopardise the employment of the staff. However, Stevn is adamant that systems such as the Smart Floor should be considered as a means to helping the staff become more effective: “Whenever we talk with potential customers, we never talk about it being a means to cut costs by reducing staff,” said Stevn. “We have had feedback from existing customers who say that the installation of the Smart Floor system is saving huge amounts of employees’ time. For example, the Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare performed research on our pilot project in Finland between 2006 and 2010, which found that falls were reduced by 97% between 2pm and 7pm, while staff sick leave was reduced by 30% and overall time saved was 21%.”

“That is time that can be redirected towards improving the care, for example spending more time with patients or residents that need the most attention. It is a matter of improving resource management – not saving costs on salaries.”

But whilst cost savings are not the ultimate goal, naturally, from a business perspective, operators will consider the return on investment as a crucial factor in any decision they make. Without sensible, considered decisions, operators risk the financial stability of their establishment, which itself is a risk



danfloor carpets installed at Hallmark Care Home Bucklesham Grange.

colours or busy floor patterns, as sharp changes in colour can be perceived as steps,” Mr Speck explains.

The same goes for contrasting floor textures. Wet rooms need high slip resistance value (SRV), but communal rooms and bedrooms can be lower.

These are also the rooms more likely to use carpet, which has also improved dramatically

in recent years, according to danfloor, which creates carpeting solutions specifically for health and care environments. “At danfloor we are the first to admit that carpet may not be suitable for all locations of a home, but we believe that when it comes to areas such as bedrooms, corridors, lounges and circulation areas, carpet plays a key role in creating an ideal

to the well-being of the occupants.

Alongside the efficiency gains made through the reallocation of staff time, there are other factors that contribute towards ROI: the needs of the resident; the nature of the organisation; the successful implementation of the technology; and various economic factors. But, ultimately, ROI is a by-product of the Smart Floor's primary objective: fall prevention.

"Significant cost savings are very real with the Smart Floor," explained Stevn. "For example in a Nordic country, if a patient or resident suffered a hip fracture, it becomes extremely expensive for the municipality. With the operation itself followed by the rehabilitation, you are looking at up to 100,000 per time. Now, if a moderately-sized nursing home installs a Smart Floor for 200,000, only two falls need to be prevented for the system to pay itself back."

But what about that initial cost? Committing lump sums towards installing supportive technologies is not always easy to justify for a healthcare operator in the context of



Palle Stevn, MariCare COO.

its fiscal budget. That is why Stevn believes that product and service providers should operate with the flexibility to accommodate financial restraints: "Ultimately, when we are talking about saving lives, there is no benefit in playing hardball over the costs," said Stevn. "Many customers we have dealt with quite simply cannot install the system in every room in one initial payment. Obviously, this is far from an ideal situation for them and their residents – think of the politics that would result from having some 'premium' rooms that feature the system, and then other rooms that don't."

He continued, "At MariCare we offer two options: buy all at once, or enter a service level agreement. With the latter, they only buy the parts that are fixed to the building and cannot be removed – so cables and sensor laminate. The rest is removable parts and we make an agreement. They make a down payment on each room, and then a fixed monthly cost that makes it entirely manageable to 'buy' the system over a period of five years or longer, depending on an operation's budgets, which will be lower due to the cost savings from the system. It dramatically reduces the initial investment, ensures the system is fully operational throughout the building, and is considerably more affordable than employing additional professional nurses to be located in the room at all times. Instead, you are employing a set of cheaper 'invisible'

nurses to work alongside and supplement the work of on-shift professionals."

Stevn added, "Based on direct feedback from our customers, the return on investment has been very quick: in some cases between 18-24 months, but with others in just 6 months."

"Whilst that ROI stems largely from the savings made through fall prevention, it stretches far beyond just that. In the context of care homes, for example, the relatives want the best care for their loved ones. With a system like the Smart Floor, operators can justify through their marketing that they have one of the best, most technically sophisticated care homes in the district. It is a huge added value and you know that the relatives will be willing to pay the extra for that added security."

Whether a healthcare establishment is public or private, the end goal is the same – improving the quality of care in a way that makes best use of an organisation's finances. With companies like MariCare now in the reckoning, that is becoming easier and easier to achieve.

"Our systems are prepared for the future," concluded Stevn. "We constantly develop new features for the products, which are the direct result of close cooperation with our customers around the world. We like to think of it as public and private innovation."

environment for residents, especially if they are living with dementia," says the company's marketing manager Catherine Helliker.

Carpet has a reputation for being harder to keep clean, hygienic and well-maintained, but danfloor's latest products address the issue. "Technical advances in yarn technology mean that our Healthcare Collection is manufactured with specially selected yarns that refract light and minimise the visual

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

LVT – Luxury Vinyl Tile, the modern alternative to sheet vinyl.

LRV – Light Reflective Values, an important measure of how much light bounces off a floor. Care homes should avoid floors with sharply contrasting LRVs because they can appear as steps to old people, increasing the risk of falls.

SRV – Slip Resistance Value, areas that will get spills, like bathrooms, kitchens and laundries should have high SRV floors.

Wear Layer Depth – a measure for carpets that looks at the density of fibres and the depth of pile. More density and shorter pile increases durability and makes carpets easier to clean and maintain.

effects of soiling and stains, whilst still being easy to clean and maintain,” claims Ms Helliker, before continuing with the science bit: “Our Equinox Collection and Economic range comes with an antimicrobial yarn treatment, mædical™ i-Link™, that guarantees optimum active freshness and active

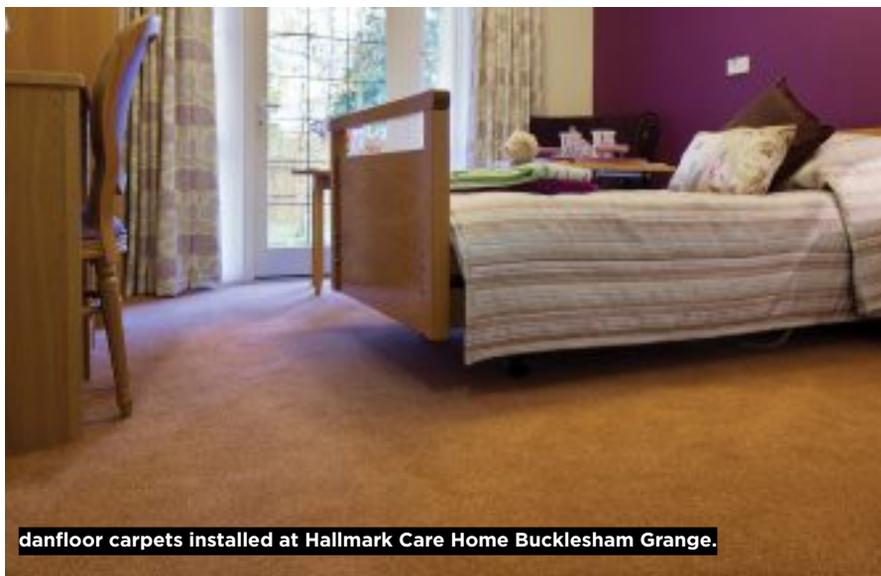
hygiene for textiles, even after intensive use and frequent washings.”

“It is based on the fixation of a non-migrating permanent coating on the carpet fibres. The coating is specially designed to deactivate micro-organisms including the bacteria that causes MRSA,” she adds.

In addition danfloor’s Equinox and ECONOMIX Collections are manufactured with an impervious membrane which means that any liquid spills stay on the surface of the carpet until they are cleaned and will not seep through to the subfloor where it can cause bacterial growth and odour problems.

Carpet makers also claim other advantages over vinyl, such as reducing the severity of injuries when people fall; improving acoustics so that people with hearing difficulties are not confused by noises bouncing around; and better air quality because dust settles better on carpet than vinyl.

The current surge in purpose-built new build properties is creating the ideal opportunity for operators to benefit from these recent advances in flooring technology. Each will have a preference for vinyl or carpet, with a mixture of the two inevitable to create environments that are safe, hygienic and beautiful. [CTP](#)



danfloor carpets installed at Hallmark Care Home Bucklesham Grange.

LIFE’S A BEACH FOR WHITBY COURT RESIDENTS THANKS TO KARNDEAN DESIGNFLOORING



The UK’s leading residential and nursing care specialist, The Fisher Partnership, looked to Karndean Designflooring to complete its purpose built care home at Whitby Court, North Yorkshire.

Inspired by a nautical-beach theme, The Fisher Partnership opted for Karndean Designflooring because of its modern designs and compatibility with underfloor heating, specifying over 1,570.92m2 throughout their latest new build project.

The stand out features include an indoor beach, using the exotic grain of Da Vinci Kenyan Tigerwood, against the inviting pebble effect of Michelangelo Navarra Chalk, a dedicated Train Room featuring Knight Tile Caribbean Driftwood, as well as a glamorous hair salon displaying Knight Tile White Painted Oak. Alongside Da Vinci Spirito Limestone in a purpose built

kitchen area, Knight Tile Pale Limed Oak in adjoining walkways and Knight Tile White Painted Oak in various bedrooms.

“We were always looking to create an engaging and interesting space for residents,” commented Jenny Fisher, business estate manager, at The Fisher Partnership.

She said: “As well as being hard wearing and easy to maintain, our flooring choice needed to offer the wow factor. Immediately impressed with the project portfolio, we selected natural wood effect flooring to complete our look against distinctive concrete designs.

“We’ve had some amazing feedback from residents and visitors alike, and we wouldn’t hesitate to specify Karndean in the future. It is by far the best representation of real wood and stone on the market.”