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Helping to create the
best healing environment

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The need for interior solutions that enhance hygiene levels, reduce maintenance costs, and create a more positive environment in healthcare buildings, has seldom been more pressing. Mitch Dean, National Sales manager for Wall Protection at Gradus, outlines how installing wall protection in your healthcare building can help meet all three needs.

With the UK healthcare sector having over the past year experienced higher levels of strain than at any point in living memory, and seen significantly reduced patient throughput as a result of COVID-19 pandemic, the benefits of wall protection for healthcare buildings – including their ability to protect interiors to reduce maintenance costs, boost hygiene, and help create a more positive healing environment for patients – have rarely been clearer. My aim in this article is to offer an overview of the key considerations when specifying wall protection for healthcare environments, touching on where it is most effective, how to achieve optimal hygiene, and how different colours can be used to aid wayfinding and add structure to your building.

Where to install wall protection

The best approach when specifying wall protection for a healthcare building is to 'zone' it into different areas, each defined by the volume and type of traffic it experiences. For example, some areas may be constantly exposed to wheeled traffic – made up of trolleys, medical equipment, wheelchairs, beds, and catering trollies, while others may be relatively quiet. Careful planning is required to ensure you choose the right solution for each zone.

The most vulnerable surfaces in any building are the corners. When left



The £350 m Grange University Hospital in Llanfrechfa, Wales's first major hospital in over two decades, has 2,612 rooms, and offers more than 40 specialist services.

exposed, corners in healthcare facilities can be easily damaged by wheeled or pedestrian traffic, leading to unsightly imperfections and even more unsightly maintenance bills. The best way to prevent this is to install high-impact corner guards with aluminium retainers to provide a reinforced defence against high-impact damage, combined with shock-absorbent vinyl covers that can be easily replaced. Similarly, wall guards should be installed in the areas of the wall that receive the most contact, where they will provide robust protection through a combination of vinyl covers, aluminium retainers, and internal bumpers specially designed to absorb and dissipate impact.

Corridors and circulation areas

Other areas that you will need to pay special attention to are corridors and circulation areas – typically the busiest parts of any healthcare facility. Here, the

key requirement is wall cladding. When installed to half the height of the wall, wall cladding will resist most direct impact damage, as well as the many scuffs and scrapes caused by the constant flow of traffic. A solution that is through-coloured will also conceal the effects of impact and abrasion, by ensuring that any surface damage shows as the same colour as the rest of the cladding, and is therefore not visible.

Finally, remember to consider the medical equipment within your building. The act of pushing the bed against the wall can cause damage to such equipment, while the raising, lowering, and tilting, of the bed can clash with overhead trunking. To solve this, correctly projected protection will help to keep the bedhead away from the trunking (and anything plugged into it) – ensuring that the medical equipment can go on performing its invaluable role.



Handrails were installed in the corridors at the Grange University Hospital, to offer patients support and respite, protecting them against falls, and also safeguarding their health and dignity.



Rubber wall and corner guards have been fitted to protect back-of-house areas in the hospital against damage from wheeled equipment.

Enhancing hygiene with wall protection

One of the main benefits of wall protection is to help create a more hygienic environment – often the main priority in clinical environments. Where hygiene is a particular concern, the wall protection you install should not only withstand impact from medical equipment, but must be impervious to bacteria and moisture, in line with HBN 00-10. To achieve this, it is essential that the surface of the wall protection is smooth and easy to clean, as well as able to cope with the heavy-duty cleaning chemicals frequently used in such areas. Consider a solution that can also be thermoformed on site to produce bespoke profiles, such as corner guards or 'U'-shapes. In addition, bathrooms in healthcare facilities require effective wall protection – particularly ones that include hoists or wheelchairs to help patients with disabilities. Here, robust, easy-to-clean cladding that can withstand intensive chemical cleaning is again the best option.

In general, no matter where it is installed, wall protection should provide a smooth and easy-to-clean surface that is easy to wipe down, and thus helps to prevent the spread of germs within the building. For further ease of cleaning and enhanced hygiene, consider wall guards and corner guards with a stainless-steel finish.

Choosing the colours

Most wall protection can either be specified in colours and tones that contrast with the surrounding wall surfaces – or that blend in with them. The advantage of solutions that blend in is that they will not compromise the particular visual style you are seeking to establish. Contrasting – on the other hand – can help

visitors and staff to navigate their way around the building by identifying each zone with a different colour.

One type of wall protection that should always stand out is handrails. Designed to provide pedestrians with guidance and support, while also offering a degree of surface protection from wheeled traffic, handrails and combination rails should have a Light Reflectance Value (LRV) of at least 30 points' difference to the surface that surrounds them, ensuring ease of recognition. Colour is also a vital consideration when it comes to care homes and other facilities for the elderly, especially where users may have dementia. This is because people with dementia often see the world differently, with what may look 'normal' to you or I potentially disorientating them, causing distress, or even injury.

Creating a welcoming feel

Another consideration – especially when specifying wall protection for waiting rooms, family rooms, and receptions – should be the sensory experience of the user. Such areas provide an excellent opportunity not only to protect the wall, but also to create a welcoming and relaxing atmosphere with little clinical feel.

Offering 'the full package'

At Gradus, we have a wealth of experience in helping estates and facilities managers protect their walls, supplying the perfect solution for healthcare facilities. We draw on this experience to help will all stages – from specification through to installation. As a recommended supplier for the ProCure22 framework, we offer one of the market's most comprehensive wall protection ranges. Our expert advisors can

provide a free building survey service, which sees them use their product expertise to identify the most vulnerable areas within your building, and recommend protection where it is required. Alternatively, our Contracts team offers a full 'supply and installation' service, that can support you from initial enquiry and specification, through site survey and manufacture in our Cheshire factories, and all the way to COVID-secure installation at your healthcare facility. **hej**



Mitch Dean

Mitch Dean is the National Sales manager for Wall Protection Systems & Supply Chain at Gradus, the UK's largest manufacturer of wall protection systems. Gradus said: "He draws on his healthcare product and industry expertise to help clients achieve the best results when choosing a complete wall protection and flooring solution. He has worked for a number of leading brands in the construction industry for over 15 years."

GRADUS

Wall Protection

Create a positive & healing healthcare environment

Inspiring | Reassuring | Calming | Positive | Welcoming*

SureProtect Design® offers a hygienic, easy-to-clean wall protection solution that can help you create your vision with bespoke designs to suit the environment.

For more information visit www.gradus.com or call 01625 428922 to book a **FREE** survey.

*Guidance in line with HBN 00-01 and 11-01

Colourful designs create a ‘less institutional feel’ at the Grange University Hospital

Gradus recently designed and installed bespoke wall protection with a printed finish at the new Grange University Hospital in Llanfrecfha, Cwmbran in south Wales. The company said: “The custom solution, an example of Gradus’s SureProtect Design wall cladding, creates a positive healing environment, while protecting the building from damage, and should thus reduce long-term expenditure on maintenance, repair, and refurbishment.”

The Wall Protection products have been fitted throughout the £350 m Grange University Hospital, Wales’s first major hospital to be built in over two decades. The hi-tech, modern facility has 2,612 rooms, and offers more than 40 specialist services, supported by 3,000 staff.

Gradus said: “The SureProtect Design wall cladding features a stunning range of designs that are different on each floor of the hospital. It is the result of a supply and fit service that saw the Gradus dedicated Contracts team carry the project from initial survey, through design and manufacture, to installation. SureProtect Design is the perfect solution for healthcare environments, as its easy-to-clean surface makes it perfect for areas requiring both an aesthetic appearance and a hygienic solution. The design is printed on the back of the clear textured sheet, which protects it, and helps create a robust environment that will future-proof the hospital against everyday damage and maintain the building’s appearance for years to come.”

Proven benefits of a positive environment

Hannah Capel, Senior Programme manager at the Grange University Hospital, said: “It is now widely accepted that creating a positive environment in healthcare settings has a significant impact on patients’ wellbeing. The wall protection installed by Gradus provides a hygienic solution, and the wonderful designs create a less institutional and more relaxing environment for our patients, which benefits them considerably. Gradus worked very closely with us throughout the project to realise the look we were after, and we are delighted with the finished design, which captures exactly what we wanted.”

Throughout the hospital, Gradus also fitted a range of other Wall Protection products: SureProtect Endure wall cladding to protect the walls from impact and abrasion; high-impact corner guards to protect vulnerable corners; wall guards and strips to protect the walls, and Bed Head Protectors to protect vital medical equipment. All Wall Protection accessories were supplied in Granite to complement the facility’s overall design .

Handrails were installed in the corridors to offer patients support and respite, protecting them against falls, and also safeguarding their health and dignity. In line with BS 8300-2:2018 and Approved Document M, these were also supplied in a Granite colour to offer a 30-point LRV difference from the wall to which they are attached, ensuring suitable contrast for support and direction. Rubber wall and corner guards were also used to protect back-of-house areas in the hospital against damage from wheeled equipment.



Gradus said: “The SureProtect Design wall cladding at the Grange University Hospital features a stunning range of designs that are different on each floor.”



SureProtect Design has an ‘easy-to-clean’ surface that Gradus says ‘makes it perfect’ for areas requiring both an aesthetic appearance and a hygienic solution.



The design is printed on the back of the clear textured sheet, which protects it, and helps create a robust environment that Gradus says will future-proof the hospital against everyday damage.