Care pathways and designing the health-care built environment: an explanatory framework

Davies, R.J. and Gray, C. (2009) A. Health and Care Infrastructure Research and Innovation Centre (HaCIRIC), University of Reading, Reading, UK

Abstract
The built environment in which health and social care is delivered can have an impact on the efficiency and outcomes of care processes. The health-care estate is large and growing and is expensive to build, adapt and maintain. The design of these buildings is a complex, difficult and political process. Better use of care pathways as an input to the design and use of the built environment has the potential to deliver significant benefits. A number of variations on the idea of care pathways are already used in designing health-care buildings but this is under-researched. This paper provides a framework for thinking about care pathways and the health-care built environment. The framework distinguishes between five different pathway ‘types’ defined for the purpose of understanding the relationship between pathways and infrastructure. The five types are: ‘care pathways’, ‘integrated care pathways’, ‘patient pathways’, ‘patient journeys’ and ‘patient flows’. The built environment implications of each type are discussed and recommendations made for those involved in either building development or care pathway projects.