

MEASURING THE WELLBEING BENEFITS OF INTERIOR MATERIALS

Research programme WISER (Wellbeing: Improving Satisfaction of End users in Refurbishment)

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The internal environment of the buildings in which people spend so much of their time has been shown to be a major contributor to their quality of life. The impacts on health and wellbeing from the built environment include direct physical ones such as the effects of allergens and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and more subtle psychological effects such as those acting on mood, emotion and motivation.

This Information Paper provides some background on the subject of wellbeing in buildings and presents the findings of a BRE Trust project, 'Measuring the wellbeing benefits of interior material selection'. The project's innovative approach was in focusing on end users' wellbeing beyond the scope of indoor air quality; wellbeing that occupants perceive to be influenced primarily by the materials used in built environments. The objective of the project was to put occupants at the heart of the sustainable refurbishment and refit of buildings.

BRE's WISER data-collection tool and *Five golden rules* guide will enable decision makers to choose materials for refurbishment and refit projects that will support the wellbeing of occupants. During the project, BRE uncovered a large and latent demand from professionals (eg architects, specifiers, asset owners or managers) who complained of the lack of clear, comprehensive, accessible information in this area of work. The absence of reliable information and guidance seems to apply across all sectors, and while only health-care environments, educational buildings and offices have been studied, it is hoped that the findings will be of use to all design professionals working in the built environment.



Figure 1: Poster illustrating BRE's 'Measuring the wellbeing benefits of interior material selection' project

Inspiring working environment aids productivity and creativity – teachers and hospital staff interviewed for the project confirmed that interior decoration could affect mood and behaviour, giving examples from their own workplaces.

