

## Pain free shopping

I never thought I'd be raving about a hospital but after hearing great things about *CircleBath* I hit the M4 to see for myself. *CircleBath* has reinvented the patient experience to the extent that you'd think you were living it up in a plush hotel rather than enduring a stint in hospital.

The belief is that you should have somewhere great to stay even when you're not feeling your best. That's why they put leading architects Foster + Partners in charge of the hospital's design resulting in contemporary décor, stunning views of the countryside and a calming sense of spaciousness and airiness throughout. There are fold-out beds in all rooms for family members to stay over, an abundance of comfortable visitor areas and high quality refreshments served day and night.

With five star facilities comes five star service. The greeting you receive when entering is on a par with the finest hotels in the world. Signage is minimal because the 'hospitality team', many of whom come from the airline industry, are always on hand to guide you to wherever you want to go. Meals, made from organic produce, are served with a smile!

The visit confirms that it pays to look outside our industry for great ideas. The future of shopping is about personal experience – without it people will simply stay at home and shop online. By taking the principles of service, design and treating customers as individuals and applying these to retailing will help to turn what is often perceived as a painful experience by shoppers into something that is pleasurable and enticing. If a hospital can take the pain out of the patient experience then surely the retail industry can take the pain out of shopping.

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