



Case Study

Waste

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

Better training, better waste management

With approximately 13,000 staff, nearly two million patient contacts a year, and an estate comprising not only the acute sites of Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals but also 27 community locations across Southwark and Lambeth, the trust presents a large and complex challenge in meeting its ambitious sustainability and waste targets.

It also needs to deliver on the government target of a 10% reduction in carbon emissions by 2015.

What was the issue / problem being addressed?

In year 2013/14, Guy's and St Thomas' spent over £1,130,000 on waste management. Healthcare services create a huge amount of waste, which in turn costs a huge amount to manage.

One of the biggest preventable factors contributing to static or increasing waste disposal costs is using expensive waste streams when a cheaper one could be used instead. Clinical waste for incineration costs £530 per tonne to dispose of, whereas domestic waste costs £125 per tonne, and recycling £70 per tonne.

Another of the Trust's main challenges is non-conformance, which is when the incorrect type of waste enters a particular waste stream. A common example of this is when paper hand towels are put in the clinical and

domestic waste streams, as they can actually be recycled. The trust operates a regular waste auditing process in all departments to deal with this.



Stickers used to identify waste type

What action was taken to overcome the issue?

It is imperative to invest in regular training and refresher sessions for staff – not only those who work within the waste management team, but also all



of those who come into contact with waste and recycling. Every single new member of staff undergoes a trust induction, a section of which is given over to a waste training session. This explains the different types of waste, the correct way to segregate them and the wider financial and environmental impact of mismanaged waste.

Additional training is then available, ranging from general to in-depth, bespoke training for certain clinical areas or job roles. These include sessions focusing on infection control for clinicians working in theatres, and food waste management for those working in the kitchens.

The risk and type of non-conformance most likely to occur differs depending on the role and area that a member of staff works in. Bespoke training means that the most common problems in those areas can be addressed more thoroughly. Training for clinical staff, for example, looks closely at how to sort clinical waste into the two appropriate streams – either the clinical waste stream for alternative treatment, for waste such as swabs, masks and gloves and costing £300 per tonne to process, or clinical waste for incineration, at £530 a tonne.

Any manager can request further training for their staff, and the waste management team ensure that the training that's delivered is aimed at the appropriate level.

What was the impact / result?

Between years 2012/13 and 2013/14, Guy's and St Thomas' have reduced their high temperature disposal by 11%, and now only have 176 tonnes of incineration waste a year – approximately 3% of their waste as a Trust. The number of tonnes of

recycled waste has increased from 23% in 12/13 to 28% in 13/14.

Furthermore, any food waste is diverted to make compost, while used oil in our kitchens is now turned into biodiesel, powering some of London's black cabs and the 'world's most sustainable building', One Embankment Place. The trust also have recycling streams for toner cartridges and batteries, and operate a successful reuse scheme for unwanted furniture.

Alan Armstrong,
Trust Waste Manager

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

"When staff segregate their waste correctly at work, they all contribute to compliance and cost savings. When it comes to recycling, we just want staff to do what the vast majority of them already do at home.."

Lessons learnt / success factors

The introduction of more waste streams create a more complex system for people to work with – so an effective training program should be ready to roll out well in advance of implementation. Engagement of staff is critical, so training has been supported by regular waste awareness roadshows and a poster and leaflet campaign.

Scaling up

In year 2012/13, the NHS spent £86.2 million disposing of waste. Costs could be reduced in many NHS organisations if they implemented more waste streams, combined with



effective training of staff on how to use them correctly. This would also aid the NHS in achieving its economic efficiency targets, and environmental objectives.

For further information on this project please contact:

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