

Cleaner Air for Great Ormond Street Hospital

When air pollution levels rise, children with lung conditions are at an increased risk of becoming ill and needing treatment. Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) therefore has a keen interest in reducing levels of air pollution.

Great Ormond Street Hospital

Travel, transport and access



What was the issue being addressed?

There are two sources of air pollution that are being tackled.

1. GOSH has a significant patient travel footprint. It sees around 240,000 patient visits. Many travel from outside London and are accompanied family members.
2. Many drivers waiting outside leave their engines running, creating unnecessary pollution in the area.

What action was taken to overcome the issue?

Travel surveys with patients and visitors were conducted. Drivers of vehicles idling their engines were also questioned. Once drivers understood how air pollution affects patients' health, they were more likely to switch off. It was decided that the lead message for the campaign should be that if people switch off,

or choose low-emission transport, they are helping patients to breathe more easily.

At workshops, respiratory patients were asked to describe how air pollution affects their condition and give suggestions about how air quality could be improved around the hospital. The project team also asked children to portray their thoughts by drawing pictures and voice recordings.



Still from the animated film - created using patients' art-work

Based on the outputs from the workshops, campaign initiatives were developed that include:

An animation - created with artwork and voice-overs from respiratory patients. The video is displayed in the hospital reception, and has been shown at behaviour change workshops with ambulance drivers.

Illustrated Walking maps - show routes from stations to the hospital. This makes it easier for patients to find their way, and encourages walking by showing the attractions along the way.

Clean Air Zone - Eye-catching street signage was created for a Clean Air Zone to encourage people to switch off their engines.

Behaviour change programme with ambulance drivers - After an informative presentation about how air pollution affects children's health – and their own health – all drivers agreed to switch their engines off outside the hospital.

What was the impact?

- There has been a 100% reduction in vehicle idling by ambulance drivers outside GOSH.
- Hybrid and electric taxis booked through the hospital taxi phone has increased from 70% – 91%.
- Patients using low zero carbon forms of transport to get from the station to the hospital has increased from 63% to 79%.

Lessons learned / success factors?

- Understand behaviour before you try to change it, using quantitative (to understand how many) and qualitative surveys (to understand why).

“By reducing idling and encouraging more visitors to use low or zero emission forms of transport, the environment has been improved for our staff and everyone who lives and works nearby. It also has the benefit of creating a more pleasant welcome to the hospital.”

Brendan Rouse, Energy & Sustainability Manager

- Make sure you have changed your behaviour before you ask others to change theirs.
- Make it appealing – encourage (nudge) people to change their behaviour.
- Sometimes the simplest initiatives can be very effective, e.g. changing the companies on the taxi phone will have a long-lasting impact and was zero cost.
- Focus on initiatives that can have a long-lasting impact, and which could be rolled out more widely in the future.

Scaling up

- The behaviour change campaign with the ambulance drivers is now being expanded to all Medical Services ambulance drivers that operate in London.
- All of the ambulance companies and taxi drivers that regularly come to GOSH are also being provided with the window stickers.

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