

Trusts across the country utilise various different types of containment for the collection and disposal of their sharps. The majority of Trusts use the common type of burn bins which are heavily utilised across the healthcare industry, and produced by a number of different companies. Whilst these types of bins do meet current guidance on disposal of sharp waste, they're not always the most sustainable option.

## THE CHALLENGE

With statistics showing that the average hospital generates 12 kilograms of waste per patient each day, the volume of waste generated as a result of burning plastic is known to contribute heavily to environmental issues and the ever-present threat of Climate Change.

## THE SOLUTIONS

As a hospital with sustainability at the centre of its vision, Yeovil District Hospital chose to use a much more environmentally-friendly method of waste collection and disposal – a reusable sharps container.

As well as helping to reduce costs by removing disposable polypropylene from waste streams, Sharpsmart bins undergo a rigorous cleaning cycle after each use and typically last up to 500 washes. Not only does this ensure that all viruses are removed, but it also significantly reduces costs associated with procuring and disposing of bins.

In order to implement the Sharpsmart System a thorough procedure has to be followed, including the provision of a TR18 report to see the types of containers used across the site, a full ward walk of the hospital site(s) and documentation of their sharps usage.

The staff at the Yeovil District Hospital were consulted about the containers used and a proposal put forward by Sharpsmart with a view to helping the trust reduce their waste production and carbon emissions.

Before system rollout, a trial was conducted in order to demonstrate the benefits of the Sharpsmart system. Once the system was officially implemented, regular contact was maintained and constant support provided at no extra cost, including wellness calls, monthly audits, additional training and ward walks – all of which helped ensure the Trust were fully optimising the system.

Sharpsmart also liaised with the hospital's facilities companies and portering teams to ensure a smooth process.

## THE RESULTS

Since the introduction of the Sharpsmart system to the Yeovil mid-2015, the Trust has experienced a wide range of benefits across the board, including considerable savings, a reduction in the incineration of virgin plastic by 10 tonnes per year compared to disposable burn bins, an improved patient and employee experience, reduced waste volumes and educational opportunities for all staff.

To date, CO2 emissions have been reduced by 13.5 tonnes and the tonnage of sharps waste sent to incineration decreased by 2.39 tonnes. It is estimated that, over the next 3 years, the Trust will reduce their CO2 emissions by a further 145 tonnes.

Feedback regarding the success of the initiative has been extremely positive. Philip Watson, Facilities Manager at Yeovil District Hospital, commented, "Changing to Sharpsmart has enabled us to reduce our incineration of virgin plastic by 10 tonnes a year, while also improving sharps safety. The Sharpsmart bins are liked by all staff, and the change from disposable bins has gone very smoothly."

