

'WASTE REVOLUTION' SECURES NORTHERN CARE ALLIANCE GREEN APPLE 2022 ENVIRONMENT AWARD

THE CHALLENGE

In 2020 the team at the Northern Care Alliance (NCA) conducted an in-depth internal waste audit of their waste management systems. The audit highlighted that sites within the NCA were using an inefficient amount of single-use plastic and cardboard containers for all High Temperature Incineration (HTI) waste streams. The audit also highlighted some opportunities to improve segregation and divert waste to a more sustainable disposal outlet.

To overcome these challenges and reach the 20-20-60 target set out by the National Health Service (NHS), the team recognised that they required a full waste stream reset – what NCA call, a **'waste revolution'**.

This reset would move them from a single-use system to an end-to-end reusable system and introduce new waste streams to increase the volume of waste destined for sustainable outlets and reduce the volume of waste sent for incineration.

THE SOLUTION

In 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, stakeholders within the Northern Care Alliance were working closely with Sharpsmart to support with contingency waste collections due to their increasing waste volumes.

Following the internal waste governance audit, NCA approached Sharpsmart to discuss their reusable sharps container system and clinical waste services.

The Trust found that if they were to utilise the reusable system, they would be able to reduce the amount of waste containers required by more than half, which would provide them with a significant reduction in CO2e emissions.

To drive compliant waste segregation for soft clinical wastes and reduce the volume of waste destined for HTI and alternative treatment, the Trust also worked with Sharpsmart to introduce the non-infectious offensive waste stream. Using a range of educational materials and blended learning, the teams worked closely to improve segregation at point of production.

In June 2021, both the reusable sharps container system and offensive waste stream were trialled at Rochdale Infirmary. Shortly after the successful trial, the system was also rolled out at Fairfield General Hospital in September of the same year. Since then, the NCA now also installed the reusable system into three intermediate care facilities, and all correct waste streams are available to ensure compliant segregation and to divert waste away from incineration.

More recently, the systems have also been introduced at The Royal Oldham Hospital.

THE RESULTS

Over the past 12 months (2021-2022) across all 7 sites within the NCA where the new waste management systems have been installed, the Trust has processed a total of 18 tonnes of waste collected via reusable sharps containers. 12.5 tonnes of the total generated waste have also been diverted away from high-temperature incineration (HTI) and sent through a sharps remediation process, where the waste is sterilised and converted into energy.

With the correct waste streams and reusable system in place, this has led to a total saving of:

- **9.05 tonnes of single-use plastics**
- **51.17 tonnes CO2e emissions**

Following the introduction of reusable containers, both Rochdale and Fairfield have **reduced the number of containers required within their sites by 60%**. This has not only reduced the amount of single-use plastic and cardboard packaging, but has reduced the number of container exchanges, having subsequent positive impacts on transport requirements, resulting in further CO2e emissions reductions.

The introduction of new waste streams has also meant that NCA have increased the volume of waste going into the offensive waste stream to 93 tonnes (July 2021-June 2022).



Stakeholders from the Northern Care Alliance proudly collecting their Green Apple Environment Award, alongside Sharpsmart Ltd Contract Manager, Mary Kenyon.

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