

The less you have to touch and clean, the easier it is to prevent infection.

That's the thinking behind NHS Grampian's specification of hands-free, free-standing sack holders throughout the five acute and nineteen community hospitals across the region's 3,000 square miles of north-east Scotland.

"We've used sackholders for a long time, however the previous style were wall brackets with hand-operated lids," Karen Wares, of the department of infection prevention and control, told *Hospital Bulletin*. "When hand hygiene audits picked up the problem of nurses touching the lid, rather than using a tissue that was then dropped into the bin, the chief executive backed the proposal to move to foot operated sackholders with silent closing lids."

All new areas are now equipped with the free-standing, foot operated, silent closing lid sackholders as standard while an on-going replacement programme is seeing the new style waste holders installed across the region.

At Aberdeen Royal Infirmary, the largest hospital site in Europe, Fiona Mitchelhill, also of the department of infection prevention and control team, explained: "The sackholders are silent closing as well. There's nothing worse when you're working on a night shift than making a noise and disturbing patients. So, previously, you could find a pile of tissues by the sackholder that should have been put in during the night. The silent closing lid overcomes the problem - it makes a real difference."

With NHS guidance recommending fire retardant waste bins, Karen explained: "The infection control risk

Infection control priority

Hands-free waste management on the quiet for NHS Grampian



Advocate: staff nurse Nikki Fasina says the hand-free solution increases infection control

outweighed the fire risk. We've never had a problem with fires. The sackholders are easier to clean and the foot operation makes them hands-free.

"Infection prevention and control undertake environmental

audits and if they find a non-sackholder they look inside to see if it's been cleaned and usually the answer is 'no' so we recommend the users change to the sackholder style.

"The previous sackholders were not foot operated and being wall mounted often restricted the size of bag that could be fitted.

"We could have gone for coloured lids but as the sack is coloured and visible there's no need. Having white lids throughout makes ordering easier."

Fiona added: "We have two sizes of sackholder, depending on the space available and the use of the area. Sluice rooms and treatment areas always have the larger version."

Like the previous style, all the new sackholders are from Environmental Hygiene

Products, one of only a few NHS approved waste bin and sackholder suppliers.

Karen said: "The new sackholders are user-friendly, they're easier to use, easier to maintain. With the sackholder style it's easier to see when the sack is ready to be replaced. Ideally they're changed when two-thirds full."

In ward 18, the newly opened day case unit, staff nurse Nikki Fasina said: "There's more infection control because you're not touching the lid and being a sackholder it's easy to see what the bag is for. The old ones used to make a noise - patients prefer the new silent closing."

Domestic staff empty and clean the units twice a day, cleaning with a multi-purpose detergent and hot water. However, if the units are contaminated with blood or body products cleaning becomes the responsibility of nursing staff using sodium hyperchlorate.

While changing the waste bags in ward 18, domestic Elizabeth Bruce said: "We don't have a problem with them. We have to position the bags so the wording is showing. The wheels on the sackholders make them easy to move."

The segregated waste is placed in Eurocarts. All sites either have a waste porter or a designated time when the waste is collected.

NHS Scotland's generic healthcare waste segregation

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Cleanliness Champions: Karen Wares (left) and Fiona Mitchelhill of NHS Grampian's infection prevention and control team





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and safe disposal routes are: black - household waste; green - 'recycled' household waste; orange - low risk special waste; yellow - high risk special waste; red - particular special waste.

As Fiona explained: "Staff induction days include training on standard infection prevention and control procedures including waste segregation so that staff know what goes into the various bags. Having foot-operated sackholders means

they follow the correct technique - not lifting the lid of the bin."

Karen added: "NES (NHS Education for Scotland) has Cleanliness Champions whose role is to promote the prevention and control of infection. The programme, being rolled-out across Scotland and recognised throughout the UK, includes waste segregation and encourages staff to look at it in their area and see if it is being segregated properly.

The infection prevention and control team look at the segregation and storage of waste as part of their environmental audit."

Asked how the sight of waste bags on open display fits in this era of creating a 'home from home' feel, Karen said: "It's a clinical area. No one ever complains. Infection control is the main priority."

With NHS Grampian covering such a vast area the logistics of the delivery

programme for the sackholders is key issue. Gary Campbell, managing director of Environmental Hygiene Products, explained: "We've been working with NHS Grampian for a number of years. If it's a large order we deliver palletised and labelled. If it's a smaller order we deliver in bulk to the central stores but with the individual sackholders labelled-up so they know where to send them, and stores send them out as part of their next delivery to the appropriate destination. The full logistics exercise saves central stores having to work out what goes where.

"It's the most cost-effective way of distribution - putting large numbers of units out to multiple locations is something we do extremely well. It's not just for the vast areas of some of the Scottish regions, the same level of service is available anywhere in the country - prime examples are Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Hull and East Yorkshire Hospitals NHS Trust."

Gary added: "Using the easy to clean, all white, foot-operated, silent closing lid version of the sackholder is a

popular and cost-effective choice across UK healthcare."

With overall environmental audits showing continual improvement, Karen said: "The foot operated style has eliminated staff touching the bins and with the silent closing lids there's no noise when they're used - they've been very well accepted."

For further information, call Environmental Hygiene Products on 01862 893978 or visit www.ehpl.net



Easy to clean: domestic Elizabeth Bruce shows how

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