

It's win - win for Royal Free Hampstead NHS Trust. It's been able to change its waste bin lids to different colours - saving over £125,000 in the process - and implemented a recycling programme that's reaping further cost savings with reduced landfill tax. In fact the scheme will pay for itself in less than three years.

"Everyone was questioning why services were so far behind when they were already recycling at home," logistics manager Dave Reavy told *Hospital Bulletin*. "Around four years ago we undertook a waste audit with Well Environmental who introduced us to EHP (Environmental Hygiene Products) and we put their black and yellow lidded bins into most wards.

"We'd been looking at how to undertake waste recycling when the legislation changed - you had to do a risk assessment if you wanted to stay as you were.



## ROYAL FREE GOES GREEN

Changeable bin lids save trust £125,000 and herald recycling drive



A Duty of Care audit in March 2009 said we could no longer keep that stance and we needed to change to orange lidded bins for clinical waste. We were already recycling cardboard and confidential waste, after shredding, but there was 1,200 tons of domestic waste a year that we weren't recycling.

"At least 80% is now recycled, that's about 960 tons saved, with £20,000 annual savings on landfill tax too. So there's payback in less than three years."

Facilities director Jeremy Sharp added: "It pays for itself, meets the green agenda and cuts landfill costs. There's been lots of positive response from staff - there's a real desire to meet the sustainability agenda and working with EHP enabled the project to move forward

quickly."

Outlining the changeover Dave Reavy said: "We spoke to EHP about what could have been a large order for new bins but they turned it down. They told us that we only needed to change the lids. Until they told us we didn't realise we could. From what could have been a £200,000 spend we moved to around £70,000 for the whole project - about £50,000 with EHP and the rest in back of house services. EHP's costs covered the replacement lids and some smaller bins so that we could increase the capacity on site and implement the recycling.

"When we told EHP how many lids we needed, they said we could do it more intelligently - we can stagger it and phase it in over three to four weeks, with a phased delivery too. With their help we planned a two-week rollout of fitting the new lids, with delivery a week or two before. EHP also looked at our assessment and changed the mix of lids from what we'd proposed."

EHP's help didn't end there. When it came to the eight-day implementation programme - more than just the tools for the job - it provided the services of Gary Mitchell a skilled operative who trained the Royal Free's teams and worked alongside them throughout the project.

"Without the expert training and help it would have taken much longer - he knew exactly what was to be done," explained Dave Reavy. "We planned out the whole trust. Clinics were done out of hours and wards outside of protected meal times."

The lid changeover programme was supervised by facilities assistant Sumal Karunaratne, who explained: "Every area was unique and we had to make the changeover as smooth as possible.

"In the ward, we removed the bag, cleaned the bin and then took it outside to an area we'd cordoned off, changed the lid, cleaned the bin again to cut any infection risk, put the correct bag in and returned the bin with

its new lid to the ward. In many areas there was not a lot of room but the bins have to go where staff are happy with them. I made sure they knew who to contact if they had any queries.

"It was fantastic to have Gary Mitchell from EHP there, he was a great help." Gary and Sumal worked on the lid changeover 12 hours a day for the eight days of the rolling programme, with other members of the facilities team assisting as required. In all, 1656 lids were changed and 400 new bins supplied.

Sumal added: "Everyone was in scrubs with ID cards so that staff and patients knew we were hospital staff. There were Dignity of Care issues. In single rooms I had to speak to patients and found they were very enthusiastic about it. Some of the areas were difficult to do, such as the labour suite and ICU.

"The main issue was education. I tried to find a 'champion' in each ward, someone who was happy to ensure other staff knew how the



recycling system worked - which items went in which bins. A lot of the wards were anticipating us coming and were looking forward to it."

Already 95% completed at the 1,000-bed Royal Free, the plan is to take the programme to the Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital. The scheme which has seen 200 to 300 litres of extra waste capacity go onto each ward included a full training programme supported by informative posters for patient areas and credit card sized reminders for domestic staff of what waste goes where.

Speaking on behalf of Well Environmental, a waste specialist who undertakes the trust's waste audits, Richard Winch explained: "Each year the NHS is moving towards greater compliance, which not only streams out hazardous waste but also means greater savings. If half of trusts did half as well as Royal Free we'd put £15m back into the NHS."

A long-standing NHS waste bin specialist, EHP's managing director, Gary Campbell explained: "A number of years ago, we introduced a system that allowed end users to replace lids on bins without having to buy a



Sumal Karunaratne led the lid-changeover teams

whole new unit. We also recommend that customers buy white-bodied bins throughout, with the relevant lid colour depicting the waste stream. This was done at a time when colour coding was becoming more prevalent - the main reason we introduced the system was to ensure that if purchasers got the wrong initial mix of colours, there was a cost effective solution to rectify it.

"When the government introduced HTM 07-01 in 2007, pretty much all hospitals in

England and Wales found that they all of a sudden had too many yellow lids instead of the recommended orange ones for clinical waste. Although yellow can still be used, yellow bagged waste has to be incinerated, whereas the orange alternative can be 'treated' and then sent to landfill. In some parts of the country, this can save more than half the cost of disposing of the waste. So you can see the obvious advantage of changing over to orange."

Gary said: "A number of our customers have taken advantage of the lid changeover service, although Dave at the Royal Free was the first to really embrace what we can offer.

"As at Royal Free, we can also assist in the project management of a lid replacement programme. We can offer the relevant training, the tools required and assist in conducting an initial and final audit, so that the day-to-day working of the hospital is not affected."

EHP's chairman and founder, Roy Jones, added: "In these strained economic times, we all recognise that it is important that as much of the NHS budget is spent on treating patients. We

hope that our cost saving systems allow many more hospitals to do just that by allowing money saved to be diverted to where it is needed most."

How's it all worked out in practice? A recent highly successful launch of the recycling programme, that was a hit with staff, is being followed by a one-day event lead by infection control and supported by the trust's waste contractors. The bins, with their silent closing lids are a hit on the wards, easy to clean on a daily basis with their removable bodies and to steam clean as part of the trust's Deep Clean Plus programme.

Dave Reavy concluded: "It's been a win-win situation. We've saved on money and space and met the green agenda. Every year we're compliant with the CQC on waste - now we've improved even further. And the carbon footprint was an 'A' before so we're off the scale now!"

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