



Case Study:

University Hospital Southampton

Leading the way in effective
waste segregation

University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust (UHS) has become a beacon of excellence in waste segregation after developing a compliance blueprint which includes waste ambassadors, internal auditors and a real-time auditing tool. Discover how the trust is leading the way while improving safety, sustainability and cost efficiencies in this transformative success story.

UHS is one of the largest trusts in the south of England with more than 13,000 staff. It delivers a 1,400-bed service across six sites with 42 theatres. These sites include Southampton General Hospital — which specialises in neurosciences, oncology, pathology and cardiology — and Princess Anne Hospital, a centre of excellence for maternity care.

Spreading the segregation message

Managing clinical waste safely, sustainably and compliantly can be complex. UHS creates a broad range of waste types, and as a large teaching hospital, spreading awareness about waste segregation is a challenge.

The trust partners with Stericycle to manage its clinical waste and has been using Bio Systems reusable sharps containers for several years. UHS is now focused on further elevating its waste segregation standards. But how do you spread the message to a busy, extensive and shifting workforce? And where do you start?

A scalable blueprint

This challenge lay at the door of UHS Waste Manager, Daryl Barnes. Daryl realised he couldn't do it all at once, nor alone, and that he needed some tools. So he called on the support, guidance and training of Matt Miles, Stericycle's key account manager.



Initial consultation with Stericycle involved stakeholder planning sessions and joint action plans. Matt then supported Daryl in an advisory role throughout the project. Working closely with Matt, Daryl's plan was to prioritise one clinical area, improve segregation compliance there and then roll out the project across the trust. And he had some innovative ideas for achieving this aim.

Waste and sustainability champions

"We realised very soon that it needed a personable, face-to-face approach to disseminate the segregation message to 13,500 employees," say Daryl. "So, we came up with a network of self-nominated waste ambassadors, slightly rebranding the role to 'waste and sustainability champions' to encourage take-up.

"Then we analysed waste volume data by type and site using Stericycle's data, which was fantastic. To get more granular, we trained waste operatives on the ground to manually collect data, and created a system for bag tagging at source. I then built an app to interpret the data which I now use to send audit reports to divisional leads and the financial director.



"All this allowed us to identify that one of our largest-producing departments for waste was theatres, producing 15% of the trust's total volume. And because theatres had the most interest from waste ambassadors, we chose to focus our attention on that area first."

Daryl developed a waste ambassador training program, relying on Matt's regulations expertise to align it with the HTM 07-01 and the most up-to-date guidance.

The program clearly sets out the expectations of service users, trains ambassadors to do a basic audit and invites them to request further support if needed. Daryl trained the first 250 waste ambassadors face to face, supplemented with virtual education learning.

From the start of the journey, Matt was on site 1-2 full days every week to carry out audits and spread awareness of excellent waste segregation. He delivered face-to-face education and engagement sessions for clinical staff, waste technicians and the auditing team. He also worked alongside Daryl within theatres to understand users' working habits and environments to help create informational posters and directional signage.

Leading the way in effective segregation

During the last audit, theatres reached 96% compliance. With a 33% year-on-year increase in Bio Systems reusable sharps — mostly for pharmaceutical waste — UHS has also prevented the equivalent increase in the amount of containers not being manufactured and incinerated, avoiding a third more CO₂.

UHS outcomes

- 96% compliance for theatres during the last audit
- 33% rise in CO₂ avoided following the same year-on-year increase in Bio Systems

Matt still visits the hospitals every week, spreading awareness and supporting the new auditing team. He's proud of his work with the trust: "What we've achieved together is an exponential increase in waste segregation standards and a roadmap for others to follow. Daryl and the team are leading the way in sustainable waste management - for others to follow."

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The trust's blueprint for working with theatres is now being deployed in other departments. The model is being adapted to different environments and constantly updated in a continuous cycle of improvement.

Daryl adds: "Engagement and trust across the departments we're working with has increased and several subgroups have formed in various clinical areas, taking accountability and ownership of their waste. We've also developed a succession system for our auditors and waste ambassadors.

"The Stericycle partnership, especially Matt's involvement, has empowered us to achieve all these goals. And now that we've established a solid foundation, we need to ensure we keep the processes, programs and tools evolving."



Waste project outputs

- 250+ waste ambassadors
- x2 FTE waste auditing team
- x1 real-time data auditing tool
- VEL platform for ambassador training
- Several fully accountable subgroups
- A blueprint for improving waste segregation