

Going Green

Paul Taylor, Recycling & Waste Project Manager at i-Clean Systems Ltd advises care homes on how to execute a sustainable waste management plan in 2015.



The festive season generally serves to highlight the amount of waste produced in care homes. From unwrapped presents, extra food waste and glass bottles, to Christmas trees stripped of their needles - a mountain of additional waste and recycling issues crop up after Christmas. Finding sustainable, competitively priced solutions to deal with waste is never easy, but here are some suggestions to help you introduce or increase recycling in your care home.

Can't Measure, Can't Manage

It is important to understand how much and what type of waste you are having removed from your site by listing waste types, how the material is contained, how much is in each container, how often waste is removed and the costs of removal.

Make separate lists for items that do not go into containers prior to removal (e.g. mattresses, desks, chairs). List all medical or hazardous waste streams so you have an audit trail should any inspectors pay you a visit. Once you know what you are dealing with, consider how to reduce, re-use and recycle.

Reduce, Re-use, Recycle

You could reduce waste by asking organisations delivering new equipment to take old equipment away. For items delivered by pallet, ensure the pallet goes back or is collected for free on the next delivery. Internally, duplex print and photocopy and return used ink cartridges to the supplier for free. There are various re-use options, you just need to implement them. But avoid printing

off notices about these changes as this just increases paper waste!

In a care home, catering is a good place to start for quick recycling wins. By removing food from general waste (with the exception of medical or hazardous waste) you are generally left with dry mixed recycling (e.g. paper, plastic, cardboard, metal, glass). This can be removed from site 30-60% cheaper than general waste. All you need is a food waste collection or on-site macerator. There are many food waste collections and solutions across the country. Find providers online, through your local authority or via a community waste officer.

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Next, consider how waste is collected from building users and how staff deliver it to the waste storage area. If a small food caddy and waste bin for dry mixed recyclables are feasible, install them into each living area so staff can keep waste receptacles separated on collection. If using inserts in food caddies ensure they are compostable or biodegradable. Within the home use clear or colour co-ordinated transparent bags, never black bags - these stop recycling in its tracks.

Make Waste Pay

In some areas of the country, you can obtain returns or have waste removed for free. Metal is an

obvious commodity, however, local recycling companies may also collect textiles, cardboard and paper for free depending on your volumes. Electrical waste can often be removed free of charge or with small rebates, depending on the material. Contact charity shops if you have furniture or goods in reasonable condition; they often pick up for free too.

Regarding medical waste, you may consider downgrading some of your 'orange bag waste' to 'tiger bag or offensive waste', but consult providers first as there is a wide-range of pricing structures and services available.

Small Responsible Steps

Do not re-organise your waste system overnight. Take it one stage or waste stream at a time otherwise building users could be confused and deterred from making changes.

Contact as many recyclers or providers as possible. Don't be afraid to ask where the material goes and what happens to it, because you have a duty of care until it reaches its end of life solution.

You may not have a waste policy, but demonstrate you are a responsible business by preventing waste from going to landfill. Just undertaking this process will reduce many of your waste costs, create a greener environment and cut your carbon footprint.

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