



# HOW-TO GUIDE

## Undertaking a Bin Placement Survey

Looking at the type of materials that make up your waste will give you an idea of the level of materials incorrectly placed in both the general landfill and healthcare risk waste streams. By implementing often simple improvement options, you can reduce these levels and thus the quantity of healthcare risk waste and general landfill waste generated in your facility. This HOW-TO guide outlines how to undertake a bin placement survey in your facility.



### What do I need to undertake a bin placement survey?



- Agreed co-operation of staff from the area - make an appointment with relevant staff to ensure that they are available to assist you

- Note pad and pen - to record observations and make notes



- Camera - take pictures to document findings and help assist you in preparing reports



### Types of waste surveys you can undertake in your hospital

There are generally two types of surveys that can be undertaken in a healthcare facility:

#### 1. Detailed waste survey

The detailed waste survey, will give you an overall idea of the degree of waste mismanagement in your facility, but also highlight the areas with particularly bad management. You can then focus your often limited resources on these areas first e.g. undertaking a bin placement survey.



#### 2. Bin placement survey

The bin placement survey highlights improvement options in each area, by reviewing how the waste could be mismanaged in terms of the provision and placement of bins.



**The more detailed a survey you undertake the more information you will get for your facility, but the more work it requires (staff days & resources).**

### Step 1: Acquire the co-operation of staff

It is important that a member of staff from the area you intend to survey is available to accompany you, to answer any questions you may have. The staff member will need to answer questions on the normal activities undertaken in each area of the ward, types of waste generated and the waste classification policies. For this reason a more senior staff member e.g. CNM would be most appropriate.

Make sure to undertake the survey at an **appropriate time**. If you undertake the survey just after the bags in the bin have been changed, then you won't be able to see the contents of the bin and determine normal activity.

### Step 2: Look at each type of room in the ward or area

Where possible visit all of the rooms in the ward or area being surveyed. However rooms can often be occupied or in near continual use (e.g. operating theatres). Wards or treatment areas will often have a number of each type of room e.g. single room, multi-bed ward. In this case look at an example room, check with staff if there is anything different in the other rooms, and apply your results from the example room for all.

### Step 3: Determine the normal activities undertaken in the room

Ask the staff member the following questions:

- What activities are normally undertaken in the room?
- What types of waste are normally generated in the room?
- Is healthcare risk waste disposed of in the room?
- Is recyclable packaging likely to be generated in the room or is it removed in another area. For example in some facilities packaging is removed from equipment and materials in the clean utility room, while in other facilities the packaging is removed at the patient bed. In the latter case a recycling bin may be needed in the dirty sluice/utility room.



Room with very large volume of recyclable packaging - not provided with recycling bin

This will help you to determine the types of waste that are likely to be generated in the room, what can and cannot be recycled, and correspondingly the types of bins needed.

### Step 4: Review the bins currently provided in the room

Observe the following in relation to each type of bin provided in the room.

- (a) **Number of bins provided:** If more than one of each type of bin is provided - note how many.
- (b) **Size of the bin: Large or small.** It may be easier just to note if the bin is small.
- (c) **Location of the bins in the room:** Note where the bin is placed (e.g. near the hand wash sink, at entrance to the room, etc). Also note if it is beside another bin.



Example of waste bins provided in a dirty sluice/utility room

### Step 5: Observe what materials are in each bin

Look into each bin and note if the wrong type of material is in the bin. For example, note if clean cardboard or plastic packaging is in a healthcare risk waste (HCRW) bin. Where possible take some photos to support your observations.

The staff member can also help identify any existing problems with the type of bins or their use by staff.



**Useful tip when taking photos...** Following the survey, it may be difficult to remember in what room the different photos were taken. A useful tip is to take a picture of the room name or number before you enter each room. You will then know, that all photos after this, were taken in that room.





### Step 6: Observe the instructional signage and guidance provided in the room

Have a quick look at the type of instructional guidance provided in the rooms. This may be in the form of signage on walls or stickers on bins. Determine the following:

- Is the signage clear, understandable, and located in the right location? Is it clear what can and cannot be placed in the recycling and HCRW bins
- Are the different bins distinguishable and identifiable i.e. is it clear which bin is the recycling bin

You may only need to undertake Step 6 in a small number of wards as you will find the results are consistently the same. This will give you an overall feel for the signage, and whether it needs to be improved.

### Step 7: Make a note of other aspects of activities in the room

Make sure to note any other pieces of information that will affect the management of waste in the area e.g. is there limited space for additional bins in the room.

### Step 8: Review the results of the survey and determine the following for each room in each area

Following the survey ensure to analyse the information recorded for each area. It can be useful to put the findings of the survey into an excel worksheet or word document report

- **Can any of the bins be removed?** Focus particularly on the HCRW bins.
- **Are additional bins needed?** If a lot of recyclable packaging is generated in the area, is there space to add a recycling bin?
- **Can a smaller bin be provided instead?** Cleaning procedures generally require that waste bins be emptied a set number of times a day, regardless of whether they are full. It is not uncommon to see a large waste bag, containing only a single piece of tissue paper, being disposed of. Considering providing a small waste bin in areas where small volumes of the waste is generated.

This is particularly important for healthcare risk waste. If there is limited space in the bin, staff will be less inclined to fill it up with material that is not risk waste.

- **Can the bin be moved to a better location in the room to prevent misuse?** This is particularly important for the HCRW waste bin.

Is it positioned next to the handwash sink? Paper hand towels may be accidentally thrown in.

Is it near the entrance to a room, where the door is usually kept open (e.g. dirty utility room)? Landfill waste and recyclable material may be thrown in by passersby. This does not apply for isolation rooms.

- **Is the instructional signage clear?** Or does it need to be improved!



Clinical waste bin incorrectly placed next to hand wash sink - contained high level of paper handtowels

Ensure you review the **BEST PRACTICE GUIDE: Waste bin provision & placement**, on the Green Healthcare website to get guidance on the correct provision of bins in your facility.





### How to record the information from your survey.

Each healthcare facility and each room within the facility is different. Your facility may not have any recycling bins in place or provide a recycling bin in each room. Small bins may not be used in any part of your facility, or they may be commonly used. So it can be difficult to use one template document to record the information observed during the bin placement survey. A template may be too restrictive and be awkward to use.

As you undertake the surveys in different areas, you will find the way you record the information will develop naturally.

For example if you do not have many small bins, the number of general waste bins noted would all be large. If any small bins are then noted, you may record it in brackets next to the total value.

The EXAMPLE below shows how to record the information observed during the survey.

#### Clean sluice room (a.k.a clean utility room, clean preparation room)

Example!

Materials used in the treatment of patients are sourced and prepared in the room. All materials needed are placed on a disposable cardboard tray. All large materials are unpacked in the room, with other materials unpacked near the patient.

Large volumes of packaging generated in the room, with the only general landfill waste produced being paper towels from the one hand wash sink in the room.

Hospital policy requires that all waste, particularly healthcare risk waste, is disposed of in the dirty sluice room, to prevent cross contamination.

Each room used for isolation is provided with its own healthcare risk waste bin.

### Suggestion of how to record this information during the survey

#### Room: Clean Sluice Room

1. All waste from patient procedures disposed of in dirty sluice room.
2. No healthcare risk waste disposed of in room.
3. Large volumes recycling generated.
4. General waste mostly paper towels. No instructional signage in room.
5. No recycling bin provided.

#### Current bins:

General - 2

\* one near entrance - high levels of cardboard and plastic film.

\* one near handwash basin (SMALL) - mostly hand towels

Clinical - 1

near entrance to the room, beside the large general waste bin - large proportion of non-contaminated material in bin.

#### Recommended bins:

General - 1 (Large)

Place near handwash sink. Consider replacing with small bin if volumes allow.

Provide instructional waste signage in room; on or near bin.

Recycling - 1

place near work bench where materials unpacked.

Remove all healthcare risk waste bins

from room - in line with hospital policy to dispose of all healthcare risk waste in dirty sluice room

