

ELFT WASTE REDUCTION 2022

In week 7 of our waste campaign, we focus on pharmacy and some of the great work staff around the Trust are doing to reduce medication waste.

Maryam Chohan, a pharmacist supporting the mental health crisis pathway in Luton & Bedfordshire, had been running a QI project which focussed on improving pharmacy input with the crisis pathway team. In April this year, Maryam discovered that medication was being wasted in the crisis pathway and so she broadened the scope of her QI project to include some waste reduction change ideas.

As many as 9 bags of medication were being disposed of every fortnight in the crisis pathway! Further investigation found that the majority of this waste was caused by service users being discharged from the pathway without their medication. Once medication has been dosed and labelled for a specific service user, we cannot then re-use it for another service user and it has to be destroyed for safety reasons.

In addition to the waste, service users can then be without the medication they need and this can lead to further issues with their health and wellbeing and a delay in their recovery. Many will visit their GP following discharge from the pathway and have the medication issued again, so within our health system, the medication is being funded twice.

Maryam delivered training sessions on medication waste to raise awareness with the crisis multi-disciplinary team and has been also testing support workers dropping off the medication to service users' homes. Maryam said *"tracking medication waste within the Crisis team has helped me identify key areas that we need to work on, such as ensuring medication is given at the point of discharge. I am hoping the team can continue supporting this work on waste reduction and through this we can improve patient care and work towards the Trust's plans on working more sustainably"*.

By July, the number of bags of medication being waste in the Luton & Bedfordshire crisis pathway was down to zero! The cost of each medication of course varies but the fantastic waste reduction work that Maryam and the crisis pathway team has done has saved at least £5 per week just in this one area.

Tracy Wostear, manager of the Trust's Dispensary at Mile End Hospital, also identified unnecessary medication waste in our mental health inpatient wards in Luton. £368 was wasted on unnecessary inhalers in one week alone! Tracy carried out a spot check audit *"I questioned all requests from this team and managed to reduce quite a bit of waste. Medication was being ordered by ward staff without local pharmacy stock cupboards being checked first"*.

All medication used by our teams in Luton & Bedfordshire has to be prepared in our Mile End dispensary and then transported to Bedfordshire in a van. Tracy's work reduced medication waste, freed up the time of dispensary staff for better use and had a positive impact on the Trust's carbon footprint by reducing deliveries from London to Bedfordshire. Another piece of fantastic waste reduction work!

As you would expect the Trust spends several million pounds on pharmacy every year – it is near the top of our Top 20 high spend areas. Our high spend areas provide great opportunity for cost reduction; even reducing spend in these areas by a small percentage can release a large sum of money... and this article highlights just two areas of the Trust where medication is being wasted unnecessarily – there will definitely be more!

Tackling the waste in our systems and processes – in this case wasted medication – can allow more effective allocation of resources to areas where we can have a real impact on the health and wellbeing of our service users and staff.

If this story stimulates ideas about the waste in your area of work but you need some support to reduce or remove it, sign up to our waste reduction tool workshop in September!

Monday 12 Sept, 9:00 – 9:45 am AND Friday 16 Sept, 9:00 – 10:00 am

These sessions are open to staff at every level and in every directorate of the Trust. We have already trained around 60 staff to use this tool and we welcome service users and carers to join these sessions too.

You can book here: <https://forms.office.com/r/3rhJgP11qx>

Please continue to get in touch with sarah.barnett6@nhs.net if you have a waste reduction story to share or if you need any support to address some waste you have identified.

Together, we can all reduce waste at ELFT



PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT TEAM

Lorraine Sunduza *Chief Nurse & Financial Viability Exec Lead*
Samanthi Gibbens *Interim Chief Finance Officer & Financial Viability Exec Lead*
Sarah Barnett *Financial Viability Programme Manager*
Dr Waleed Fawzi *Financial Viability Clinical Lead*