



Reducing waste at the Nelson Marlborough District Health Board (NMDHB) – a Case Study

Background

In 2011, Nelson City Council (NCC) funded Waste Education Services (WES), part of the Nelson Environment Centre (NEC) to work with the NMDHB on reducing waste. Previous to this, work had already been undertaken by the NMDHB to reduce waste to landfill, which had resulted in positive outcomes. Further support was provided to drive the programme forward and look at other ways to reduce waste.

The Challenges

- To reduce waste to landfill and lessen the environmental impact of the NMDHB
- To improve waste management systems and cost efficiencies

The Process

- A sample waste audit was undertaken by WES in June 2011.
- Due to the amount of waste generated by NMDHB, only a sample of the overall waste was audited (16 sacks).
- Waste was audited from two wards, Surgical and Medical, and one administration department, Corporate Development.
- A walk-through of the sampled areas was undertaken to better understand the flow of waste through the departments.
- The above activities along with baseline statistics relating to the previous 18 months landfill and recycling rates indicated that there were a number of actions that could be taken to further reduce the amount of waste going to landfill.
- A report with recommendations was submitted to NMDHB in support of their journey of waste reduction.

Recommended Changes

- Clear educational messages provided to all staff around waste reduction, how it improves the wider environment and their role within it on an ongoing basis.
- Improve signage at all recycling stations, staff areas, kitchens, wards and visitor areas to ensure consistent waste reduction messages are provided to all those using the facilities
- Introduce a new recycling system across the organization that is easy to use, convenient, cost-effective and reduces the incidence of contamination of materials e.g. Envirowaste's 'EnviroCycle' system or Waste Management's 'Commercial Combo' system.

- More recycling stations placed in prominent, well-used areas to encourage greater diversion of recyclable material from the general waste stream. In particular it was recommended that a recycling station should be located on every floor of Nelson Hospital.
- Removal of some waste bins from work station areas to be replaced with recycling facilities to make wasting less convenient and recycling easier.
- Paper pigs (collection boxes for recyclable paper) available on every desk/work station to make paper recycling as easy as possible. For confidential waste, easy access to confidential waste bins was recommended.
- A review of procurement policies was recommended to ensure careful consideration is given to products purchased with regard to packaging and long-term sustainability. Areas suggested for further consideration included:
 - A range of office products
 - Compostable products designed to replace plastic, foil, and unsustainable paper items including single-use disposable trays, cups, plates, cutlery e.g. PotatoPak
 - Paper towels

Review of Outcomes to date

Following implementation of some of the recommendations, the following outcomes have been achieved:

- A new recycling system has been introduced across the organization called EnviroCycle. Provided by Envirowaste, this system has made recycling paper, cardboard, plastics, and glass easy and convenient for staff, visitors and patients and has reduced costs as fewer bins are required. In Blenheim a similar service called 'Commercial Combo' has been introduced by Waste Management.
- New signage has been placed on all bins to complement the EnviroCycle/Commercial Combo systems and encourage more people to use the system.
- In pharmacies, containers are now available to recycle cardboard and plastics.
- Paper pigs are available for anyone wishing to recycle paper from their desk.
- In December 2011, NMDHB ran their first zero-waste Christmas event for approximately 1000 staff and their partners. Compostable potato plates, cups and cutlery were used during the event with varying degrees of success and all items were taken to Greenwaste to Zero in Richmond for composting by Envirowaste following the event. The success of this approach will be reviewed at a later date.
- There has been a noticeable change in attitude by many who work at NMDHB and are now consciously choosing to dispose of their waste in a more environmentally friendly way.