

Sustainable Healthcare – The Green Theatre checklist

The RCoA have recently published an update to their ‘Green Theatre checklist’ – Find out what’s new

Published: 26/03/2025 | **Author:** Lampadina Group

It is estimated that the NHS contributes as much as 5% per cent of the UKs CO₂e (including procurement, staff and patient travel, infrastructure, and waste management). Of that vast number pharmaceuticals make up 20% of NHS England emissions and the updated Green Theatre Checklist attempts to address this and the wider issue of waste.

<https://rcoa.ac.uk/blog/introducing-updated-green-theatre-checklist>

This figure is increasing due to a rise in the use of total intravenous anaesthesia (TIVA) but can be mitigated by implementing the advice in the document ‘Don’t open unless needed’ and correct disposal.

New recommendations from the Royal College of Anaesthetists suggest that a lot of waste in theatres and ICU’s is being incorrectly disposed of in yellow and orange bins instead of blue bins. This is not only more costly but also more damaging to the environment in it’s disposal and goes further to recommend the use of a cardboard blue bin.

14 RECYCLE/use lowest carbon appropriate waste streams: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ use recycling waste streams for packaging or, if not available, domestic waste stream (prior to patient entering the room)▶ use non-infectious offensive waste streams (yellow/black tiger) unless clear risk of infection (orange)▶ ensure only appropriate contents in sharps bins (sharps/drugs) <p>- Switch to low impact sharp bins e.g. reusable or cardboard boxes - Arrange metals/battery collection where possible</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
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Fig. 1 Image from the RCoA Green Theatre Checklist

Why is this relevant?

Firstly, blue waste bins are for pharmaceutical waste and currently a lot of the waste that is produced in these locations (giving sets, syringes, controlled drugs, IV drips etc.) are being disposed of incorrectly in yellow waste bags and containers and even plastic sharps bins

Yellow waste costs significantly more to dispose of than blue stream waste (roughly 3x as much) as it is incinerated at higher temperatures with much stricter rules and regulations around how it is disposed of - by adding in blue Bio-Bins the overall cost of the facilities waste disposal decreases significant.

It is unlikely many ICU’s across the country are using blue bins and therefore Bio-Bins. offer a great opportunity for healthcare providers to make cost and carbon savings with simple changes.

For example one NHS hospital which has made the switch is estimated to use 100 x 30L Blue Bio-Bins every day – with 60 theatres and 4 x ICU’s with 20-30 beds per ICU you can see how the waste produced form just one hospital is significant and making the change of waste stream and receptacles has saved thousands of pounds and tonnes of carbon. A case study produced



by the Royal College of Physicians showcased Newcastle Hospital saving 66 tonnes of CO2e and £13,500 which equates to driving 161,756 miles

<https://www.rcp.ac.uk/news-and-media/news-and-opinion/modest-small-actions-can-result-in-significant-financial-savings-for-nhs-trusts-new-rcp-report-finds/>

What are Bio-Bins?

Bio-Bins are constructed from 96% paper which is a more sustainable material than traditional plastic bins. This means that the raw material used in manufacturing is renewable and the product can be shipped ‘fold flat’. Bio-Bins are 50% lighter than the equivalent plastic container, reducing transport emissions and waste incineration emissions producing less harmful gases. Storage is also much more efficient meaning procurement department can order in larger quantities, further reducing costs due to economies of scale.

Switching to blue Bio-Bins for medicinal waste will not only help reduce costs but also make disposing of that waste more sustainable as they will like use our cardboard bins rather than plastic.



Fig. 2 Bio-Bin Range Examples

Bio-Bins are manufactured by Econix Ltd and available to purchase through Lampadina Group www.lampadina.co.uk Hello@lampadina.co.uk

References:

Introducing the updated Green Theatre Checklist

RCoA Website

Published: 14/02/2025 | **Author:** Paul Southall, Council member and co-lead for sustainability

Intercollegiate Green Theatre Checklist v2.0

Published: 11/2024

Modest, small actions can result in significant financial savings for NHS trusts, new RCP report finds

Published: 20/04/2018 | **Author** Royal College of Physicians

Econix Limited

Daniel Maudsley (Managing Director)