

Waste Management in General Practice – please disseminate to all staff in your Practice

Climate change is largely accepted as one of the biggest threats of the century. As the NHS is recognised as a significant contributor to the country’s carbon emissions (4% of the total), it has been given a target to reach net zero by 2040.

On that basis, the ICB is looking to introduce changes to its policies and its day-to-day green agenda and, in Primary Care, we are looking to take every opportunity to reduce our carbon footprint.

With this in mind, we would like to remind Practices of the need for the appropriate disposal of waste to ensure that we are keeping what is incinerated, to a minimum.

The only thing that should go into your orange bags, is **infectious clinical waste**, as it has the potential to cause injury or infection. It usually comprises of human tissue, body fluids, blood or laboratory specimens from infectious patients.

Owing to the significant risk to the health and the environment, this waste is usually disposed of by incineration which produces high levels of carbon emission.

Currently, the majority of the waste placed in orange bags is either not infectious or includes items such as packaging (cardboard and paper) that could be recycled. This incurs extra cost for the Practice and leads to more materials being incinerated than should be, resulting in more carbon emissions.

Please, therefore, only use orange bags when really needed and in accordance with the guidance below:

Infectious Clinical Waste

Orange bag



Waste that has been produced from the treatment of infectious patients, those suspected of having an infection and are contaminated with body fluids.

- ✓ Personal protective equipment (gloves, masks, aprons) (contaminated or potentially contaminated with Infectious bodily fluids)
- ✓ Wipes, dressings, plasters, bandages (contaminated or potentially contaminated with Infectious bodily fluids)

- ✗ Chemical/medicinal waste
- ✗ General waste
- ✗ Packaging waste
- ✗ Paper towels
- ✗ Non-Infectious waste
- ✗ Sharps waste
- ✗ No free-flowing liquids

Please also note that there is an intention to roll out black and yellow ‘tiger-striped’ bags to general practice in London for disposal of “offensive” waste, in the near future. This is defined as items that are contaminated with fluids that are non-infectious. We will let you know when we hear more.