SUSTAINABILITY ACTION

CASE STUDY
NHS Tayside – Using Warp-it to enable re-use

FOCUS AREA

Sustainable procurement requires us to work in partnership with suppliers and the supply chain to take into account the whole lifecycle, environmental, social and ethical impact of procured goods and services. The products and materials used in delivering health and care are procured from all over the world. An environmentally and socially responsible procurement approach provides an opportunity to enhance health and wellbeing globally as well as in the UK.

Healthcare facilities and services produce tons of waste every day. Waste therefore offers many opportunities for us to significantly shrink our environmental footprint by minimising or eliminating the generation of waste at the source, segregating ordinary waste from infectious waste and diverting recyclable waste from the solid waste stream.

WASTE AND PROCUREMENT

For more information contact
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BACKGROUND AND AIMS

Warp-it is an online based platform that enables subscribers to "Find, give away, or loan office furniture, equipment and other unused resources within your own organisation and beyond". It is a type of 'on-line marketplace' that allows users and organisations to donate surplus items, or to find others with spare items that they could use. This enables users to both save on procurement fees and to avoid waste costs via reducing the need for new items or disposal. The online portal also tracks the cost and carbon savings users have made as a result of their activity.

Warp-it is now in use across many Health Boards in Scotland. One of the pioneers of its use in NHS Scotland was NHS Tayside, who have been using it for over 6 years.

ACTIONS

Once the team within the Health Board had reviewed Warp-it and explored the costs to join and the benefits that could be achieved, it was very straightforward decision for them to sign up to the portal.

Raising awareness of the tool was important and NHS Tayside used a wide range of communications routes to promote its use. This was achieved through senior support and promotion and in partnership with the communications team to promote the tool via internal emails, staff magazines and other related routes. However, key successes were achieved through linking the promotion to other activities or time periods when resource use was being considered by staff. This included promotion during an annual 'spring clean', or at the end of the year when non-essential spends took place.

A key factor in the success were members of the facilities team, such as janitors and porters, acting as informal 'ambassadors' for Warp-it. These staff were able to intervene with colleagues when things were taken away or being ordered and highlight that the items could be shared or requested via Warp-it, rather than being disposed of or ordering new items.

Building an understanding and awareness between procurement and facilities teams was also key in ensuring that the tool could be best used to source or dispose of key items as required. Having a key staff member to lead on the portal also helped in terms monitoring available resources, or resource requests, and building a network of contacts and organisations within the portal with whom to share resources.

KEY IMPACTS

Over the years of its use the team at NHS Tayside have secured or pass on a huge range of items including:

• Industrial waste bins
• Desks
• Medical Equipment
• Stationery

Success did not happen overnight in NHS Tayside. It took time for staff to change procurement and disposal practices and for the approach needed to become well known and trusted. However, since 2013 the Board has made extensive use of the portal and made significant savings, equating to £235,000 of savings or 30,000 kg of waste diverted.

LESSONS

Based on NHS Tayside's experience it is important to accept that a change in practice such as this can take time. Staff need to overcome 'cultural barriers' that make it feel 'odd' for budget holders to be passing on or receiving assets for free. Staff also need to understand what the system can offer them and to build trust in the portal. Key recommendations for others using the tool are to:

• Ensure there is senior support and that the tool is well promoted

• Make sure that local facilities staff are 'on board' as ambassadors so they can promote Warp-it directly and make recommendations

• Encourage users and teams to talk to each other about successes with tool, and work with comms teams to promote the tool

• Build up a network of contacts on the platform