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Bwrdd Iechyd
Aneurin Bevan
Health Board

Our Ref AG/JP/jm-law Direct Line 01495 765072

10 February 2012

Ms Abigail Phillips
Clerk of Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Dear Ms Phillips

Re: P-04-348 Recycling Targets for Health Boards

In response to the letter from William Powell, Chair, Petitions Committee, asking for comments on the above, I am pleased to be able to take this opportunity to update you on the significant progress Aneurin Bevan Health Board (ABHB) has made over the last few years in the area of Healthcare Waste Management. ABHB has now become one of the leading NHS organisations across both Wales and the United Kingdom in this field.

Back in 2007 the former Gwent Healthcare NHS Trust embarked on an ambitious plan to review how waste was segregated and managed across the organisation. The main drivers for this review were the Department of Health Guidance HTM 07/01 and the targets set within the Healthcare Waste Strategy for Wales.

At an early stage it was quite clear that many of our staff had a real passion for recycling and for adopting greener practices within the workplace. This was mirrored by a drive within the organisation to become more sustainable and to fulfil our commitment to the environment in relation to our Environmental Management System certification to ISO 14001.

During 2007 the former Trust implemented an integrated recycling system at two pilot sites, Caerphilly District Miners Hospital and County Hospital in Pontypool. The system involved all clean dry recyclables being collected in a clear bag for sorting at a Materials Recycling Facility (MRF). This approach offers the best solution to recycle as much material as possible while working within the limited space constraints at ward level for additional bins. This approach also reinforces the 'at work at home' ethos whereby items which can be processed through the kerbside collection scheme are very similar to the material which can be processed through the recycling stream introduced at the Hospital.

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The recycling programme was enthusiastically received by all staff and has helped to raise the profile of sustainability and environmental awareness across the Health Board. During 2008 and 2009 the new waste segregation system was introduced at Nevill Hall Hospital and the Royal Gwent Hospital, the first major acute hospitals in Wales to fully adopt the Department of Health guidance and to introduce integrated recycling across all wards and departments.

Since then the Health Board has introduced integrated recycling facilities in every ward and department at all main hospitals sites, the only Health Board in Wales with this facility.

In excess of fifty tonnes of recyclable material such as plastic, metals and cardboard are diverted from landfill into the mixed recycling stream per month. This equates to a recycling rate of around 40% in relation to total general waste arisings and compares favourably with the 12.5% NHS Wales average. We also recycle fifteen tonnes of paper waste per month which is shredded and reprocessed into new paper products. Our approach within the Health Board is to consider recyclable material as a valuable resource to divert away from landfill wherever possible.

The next steps for us as an organisation, include the exploration of options to segregate recyclates from smaller community sites such as the Health Centres and Clinics, considering the viability of a zero to landfill approach and evaluating the options available to compost food waste from our larger hospital sites.

Zero to landfill is a new and innovative approach, which means that we would recycle as much material as possible and then whatever non recyclable waste is left over would be processed through a waste to energy plant to generate electricity. Although currently within it's infancy in Wales, we are in discussions to be at the forefront of this technology which will move the organisation one step up the waste hierarchy and away from the large scale use of landfill sites for non recyclable waste.

The waste management practices of the Health Board have been the subject of two Best Practice Case Studies and many presentations have been given at both local and national level. ABHB is held up as an exemplar organisation in the area of Healthcare Waste and Environmental Management, being one of only two Health Boards in Wales with full Environmental Management System ISO 14001 certification.

As a Health Board we are committed to play our part in moving the sustainable development agenda forward within Wales and would support the introduction of recycling targets at a similar level to that imposed on Local Authorities to encourage Health Boards to embrace recycling and engage with the green agenda.

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We would be happy to share best practice with NHS colleagues across Wales and share our experiences, with the view to advancing the uptake of more sustainable waste management practices and to increase recycling rates across the NHS in Wales.

We are also very keen to sustain our commitment to recycling and would welcome any support and investment the Welsh Government could provide to enable us to further progress the developments outlined above.

Yours sincerely



Dr Andrew Goodall
Chief Executive

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