

Lesley Griffiths AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Iechyd a Gwasanaethau Cymdeithasol
Minister for Health and Social Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref P-04-348
Ein cyf/Our ref LG/07206/11

William Powell AM
Chair
Petitions Committee

committeebusiness@Wales.gsi.gov.uk

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Dear William,

Thank you for your letter of 28 November regarding Petition P-04-348, Recycling Targets for Health Boards.

Work is being undertaken to improve recycling but it is important to understand the context of the pressures in a hospital environment, which make recycling a different proposition to households and commercial organisations.

The Safe Management of Healthcare Waste is the main guidance document for NHS organisations to follow for managing waste. Given the inherent risks of healthcare waste, the highest priority is given to the safe disposal of the different clinical waste streams and to segregation requirements for them. There is a common issue faced in hospitals over resources and the space available for other types of waste segregation.

Landfill across Wales has increased by 4% from 2009/10. This is largely due to the widespread introduction of the offensive waste stream for non-infectious non-clinical waste, which can now be landfilled rather than requiring heat disinfection and treatment.

To improve the situation, Health Boards are required to introduce ISO 14001 certified environmental management systems, subject to annual external audits, at major hospital sites by the end of 2012. A key component of an ISO 14001 system is the organisation is required to assess the significant environmental aspects and impacts arising from their activities, then to produce objectives and targets for the significant aspects, and to implement an improvement programme to tackle the objectives and targets. Waste management would be expected to be one of the most important aspects and impacts identified. NHS organisations should be developing objectives and targets and improvement programmes to tackle waste. The expectation is ISO 14001 compliance would be an important tool to tackle recycling initiatives at Health Boards.

The Welsh Government's National Waste Strategy: Towards Zero Waste is the all-Wales National Waste Strategy. I understand in the strategy there is a commitment to produce more detailed sector plans. The intention is for NHS Wales to feed into the production of the sector plan for the public sector. The sector plan for the public sector (including NHS) is still in preparation and my officials are engaging with waste policy colleagues to hopefully influence what is eventually produced.

Regards
Lesley

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