

# Sustainable Waste Management in Nursing Homes



# Understanding Waste Types

- General Waste - black bins
- Dry Mixed Recycling - green bins
- Organic/Food Waste - brown bins
- Glass Waste - blue bins
- Medical Waste - yellow bins

## Common Waste Types in Nursing Homes

- ➔ Pads – GW
- ➔ Swabs, bandages, gowns, gloves, tissues - yellow bags
- ➔ Bagged blood, plasma or histology waste, blood stained material – yellow lid rigid container
- ➔ Needles, syringes, sharp instruments, broken glass – sharp container purple lid
- ➔ Pharmaceutical products- out of date medicines, damaged stock, small quantities of residue medicines - purple lid rigid container
- ➔ Used sharps, scalpels, sharp tips of I.V sets, contaminated slides, razors - sharp container blue lid

# Waste Bin Guidelines

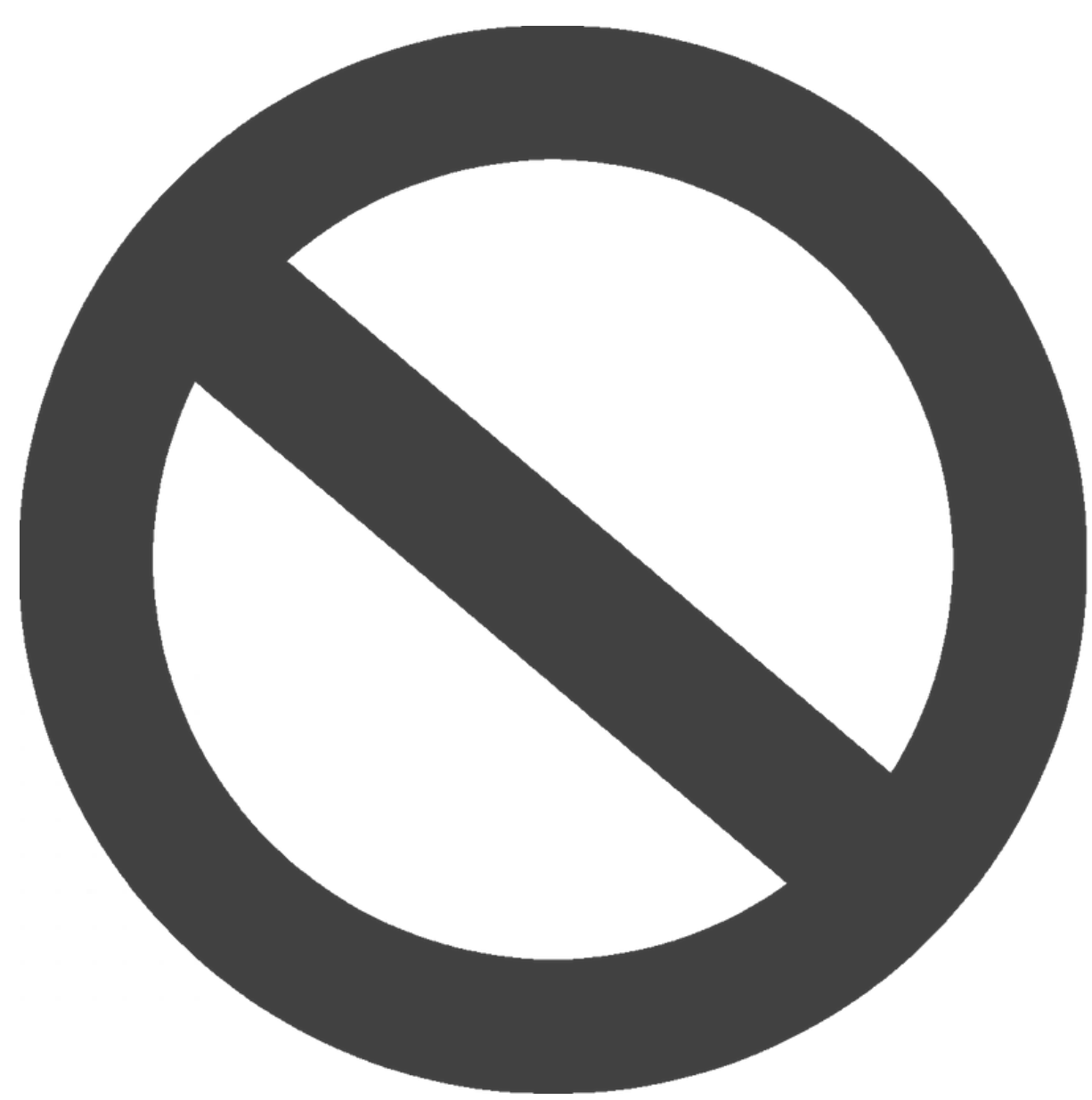


## What goes in the recycling bin?

- ✓ Must be clean, dry, & loose
- ✓ Recyclable items: cardboard, emptied porridge soft paper containers
- ✓ No food, no liquids, no soft plastics with food residue



## Common Recycling Mistakes



- 1 All food waste should be placed in Organic bins. A bag with all recycling but with food waste is considered contaminated
- 2 Black bags are **not** acceptable in recycling bins
- 3 Lack of recycling bin in office set up
- 4 Liquids and leftovers should be emptied from plastic, soft plastics and paper or cardboard food containers

# What Goes in the General Waste Bin?



Cling film, half emptied sauce sachets, netting from fruit & vegetables



Mop heads, used blue roll with cleaning products



Pads from rooms



Contaminated or unwashed recycling that has food stuck or unwashed

## Common General Waste Mistakes

1

Placing recyclable items (such as clean plastics or paper food containers) in general waste results in missed recycling opportunities

2

Disposing of organic food waste in general bins prevents its conversion into sustainable biogas and fertilizer and may lead to non-compliance with Irish Waste Regulations

3

Improper disposal of hand towels from tissue-specific bins in floors or toilets—these can and should be placed in the organic waste stream

# What Goes in the Organic Bin?

- ✓ Cooked and uncooked fruit and vegetables
- ✓ Tea bags and coffee grinds
- ✓ Napkins and paper towels (without cleaning liquids)
- ✓ Cooked meat and fish
- ✓ Food soiled cardboard
- ✓ Oil and grease leftovers (not grease trap oil, as this should be disposed of with correct supplier)
- ✓ Out of date or gone off packaged food such as yogurts/breads/meats/ fruit and veg. etc.



## Contamination of Organic Waste Bins

Avoid disposing of the following items in organic bins:

- 1 Plastic items –straws, cutlery, wrap, gloves
- 2 Foil & metal –aluminum wrap, canlids, twist ties
- 3 Glass or ceramics –broken drinkware or plate pieces
- 4 Cleaning products –wipes, cloths, or soap

Proper sorting of organic waste can lower disposal fees and improve public perception. Helps your nursing home hit green targets and comply with local regulations!

# Staff Training & Turnover Strategy



## Implement waste segregation training into onboarding

Add:

- A structured induction training module for new hires
- Visual SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) per role
- QR codes or posters with quick-access video training in multiple languages

56%

of nursing homes train their staff in proper waste management procedures\*

## Clear & consistent bin labelling

Only  
27%

of nursing homes properly label their bins\*

In nursing homes with unclear and inconsistent bin labelling leads to frequent contamination and confusion.

Request:

- KeyGreen Signage decal for all your waste streams, send us a request to [connectwithus@keygreen.ie](mailto:connectwithus@keygreen.ie)
- Our labels include Image/Icons to support understanding
- Consider hanging or pasting bin signage at eye level, if not possible in the bin body should suffice.

\*Based on a KeyGreen 2025 Self-Assessment Surveys

# Hazardous Waste

## Segregation of Risk Waste



### BAGS

#### PERMITTED

- Swabs
- Bandages
- Gowns
- Gloves
- Tissues
- Soft Material/ disposables
- Suction catheters, tubing & wound drains
- Incontinence waste from known/ suspected enteric infections

#### NOT PERMITTED

- Sharps
- Cytotoxic waste
- Chemicals
- Large anatomical waste
- Pharmaceutical waste
- Large metallic objects



### RIGID CONTAINERS

#### PERMITTED

- Blood-stained material
- Material with small volumes of free liquid
- Swabs, bandages, gowns, gloves, tissues, soft materials
- Bagged blood, plasma or histology waste
- Laboratory waste
- Disposable suction liners, redivac drains

#### NOT PERMITTED

- Sharps
- Cytotoxic waste
- Chemicals
- Large anatomical waste
- Pharmaceutical waste
- Large metallic objects



### SHARPS CONTAINERS

#### PERMITTED

- Waste from the administration of cytotoxic drugs/medicines
- Needles
- Syringes
- Sharp instruments
- Cartridges
- Broken glass

#### NOT PERMITTED

- Free liquids
- Large anatomical waste
- Chemicals
- Large metallic objects i.e. prosthetic joints



### RIGID CONTAINERS

#### PERMITTED

- Non-sharp cytotoxic contaminated healthcare waste
- Pharmaceutical products – out of date medicines, damaged stock, small quantities of residue medicines

#### NOT PERMITTED

- Free liquids
- Large metallic items



### SHARPS CONTAINERS

#### PERMITTED

- Used sharps
- Needles
- Syringes
- Scalpels
- Sharp tips of I.V sets
- Contaminated slides
- Razors
- Guide wires / trochars
- Blood-stained or contaminated glass
- Stitch cutters (plastic)

#### NOT PERMITTED

- Cytotoxic waste
- Free Liquids
- Chemicals
- Large anatomical waste
- Pharmaceuticals
- Large metallic objects i.e. prosthetic joints



### RIGID CONTAINERS

#### PERMITTED

- Placentas
- Large anatomical body parts
- Waste containing BSE / TSE / CJD blood / tissue
- Contaminated large metal objects

#### NOT PERMITTED

- Free liquids



# Waste Segregation Checklist



Ensure your nursing home is set up for waste segregation success by completing checklist.

- All areas (kitchen, service staff, office, nursing staff, etc) been assigned waste responsibilities
- Clearly labelled multi-stream bins available in every key location (kitchens, staff areas, public areas, visitors rooms, activities rooms, nurse office stations, office and service trolleys)
- There is adequate space near prep areas to prevent overflow and reduce cross-contamination
- Recycling bins checked for contamination before being moved to outdoor containers
- Bins are colour-coded and consistent across floors
- Bins are placed side by side to encourage correct waste segregation
- Cleaning chemicals containers are clearly labelled and not placed in recycling waste bins once finished
- Waste management is part of onboarding for all new hires
- Posters or quick-reference guides are displayed in all staff areas
- Regular waste-related updates or mini challenges (e.g. reduce food waste week) are used to keep staff engaged