

courier and mail
environment
people
outsourcing your transport



EARNING CONFIDENCE

Things have moved on a long way since Intercare was established 18 years ago. The NHS has gone through enormous changes and the pressure to get best value is unrelenting.

Increasingly operations that were once fulfilled internally are now outsourced to external service providers. The result is a leaner, more efficient NHS better placed to focus on what it does best.

Over the years Intercare has developed to provide specialist transport services for the healthcare sector in the North West. Since its inception it has steadily developed and now covers the core areas of courier & mail, waste management and non-emergency people movements.

"The company is constantly adapting to meet new challenges," explains Intercare chairman Fred Stone, who has 20 years experience in the healthcare sector.

"Intercare sets itself apart with protocols and quality standards that often exceed those demanded by the industry. And we continually deliver on our promises, which is reflected in the confidence that our customers place in us. I believe we are now one of the most robust operators in our sector."



Chairman Fred Stone is constantly adapting

On the road to lower emissions

With the NHS under pressure to progress towards a 10% carbon reduction on 2007 levels by 2015, and travel accounting for 18% of the organisation's carbon footprint, Intercare is striving to help it achieve its goal.

By investing in new technology we are helping our NHS clients to reduce their carbon footprint and deliver a cleaner environment.

Early trials involving an independent Ministry of Transport (MOT) test station have already indicated a 50% reduction in emissions from vehicles in Intercare's fleet.

The impressive results, which have clear benefits for both the NHS and the environment, have been achieved thanks to a hydrogen-based fuel enhancement system. The initial tests have been conducted on four vehicles in Intercare's fleet which now provides hospital and GP courier services, movement of non-emergency patients and collections of clinical waste in addition to working with the region's pharmacies.

Based on the early results the system could be fitted to all of Intercare's vehicles. The continued reductions in carbon emissions for the NHS would help it to achieve the Government's long-term target of an 80% reduction by 2050.

Green thinking

The fuel efficient, low-carbon investment follows a suggestion by employee Paul Hayward when fuel prices peaked at around £1.25 per litre.

Paul said: "At the time there was a suggestion box in the office asking for ideas on how we could cut costs. I put in an idea based on research on the internet, so now we can control costs and reduce our carbon footprint at the same time."

Paul has been rewarded for his smart thinking by having his own car fitted with the fuel enhancement system.



Lower carbon emissions thanks to Paul Hayward

Taking the pain out of sharps disposal

With traditional sharps bins having been around for so long, the arrival of a safer, greener alternative is long overdue.

Intercare and Sharpsmart are looking at how they might work together to bring a reusable sharps collection system to the North West.

The key strength of the project is that Intercare can collect the full bins and replace them with empty ones. The contents of the original bins are disposed of and each bin is then efficiently cleaned at a central location and reused at least 500 times. This eliminates the need to incinerate traditional sharps bins which accounts for around 25% of incinerated sharps waste and the majority of the associated CO₂ emissions.

Added to that, in a comprehensive study across eight sites, the Sharpsmart bins typically provided a reduction in needlestick injuries of around a third.

The significant achievement for the safety of NHS staff is achieved through a patented self-closing tray mechanism.

Using the bins is fast and simple and the tray prevents overfilling and associated penetration injuries. Liquid and airtight seals also eliminate fluid and drug spillage and aerosol inhalation.



Projected first year savings across a standard 500-bed NHS Trust

Needlestick injuries
Down 17

Plastic sharps waste
Down 10 Tonnes

CO₂ emissions
Down 30 Tonnes

Sharps waste management costs
Down £9,000

The bins come in a variety of sizes so the service can be tailored to match its use and location. Overall the Sharpsmart system wins on every level with sharps being disposed of more cleanly and safely and with lower CO₂ emissions.

service driven

Waste - clean and efficient



Tasmin Harvey and Tom Kelly have confidence in the service

Managing waste effectively is an essential task.

Since October 2008, Intercare has been operating the contract that covers almost 200 pharmacies, GP practices, clinics, health centres and private homes in Wirral.

Tasmin Harvey, NHS Wirral's Environment and energy project manager, managed the winning tender, put together for the North West Procurement Hub.

She said: "Intercare's specialist experience ensured a smooth transition when they took over the service.

"They have repeatedly delivered on far more than the routine collection of medical waste, which is usually either incinerated or treated."

Tom Kelly, project manager, said: "Intercare has been able to provide feedback and advice, which adds efficiencies and cost savings to the service. Their advice on the economical classification of bagged waste has been beneficial because we now have lower waste treatment costs.

"By working closely with sites across the region they have adapted the service to be more efficient, through simple but effective steps such as better specifying bin sizes and then using them to capacity."

The modern disposal of waste is followed by a chain of accountability, and that too has been streamlined by combining collections where possible. This in turn requires fewer Waste Transfer Notes and their associated costs.

Tom added: "We have statutory requirements to submit statistics such as the volume of waste and the cost of treatment to DEFRA. This is now accurately collated for us by Intercare and they are also able to advise us on projected cost savings."

Back at Intercare's office, Chris Parry is Tasmin and Tom's point of contact.

Tasmin said: "Having somebody at the end of the phone with specialist knowledge of medical waste is very reassuring."



Meet the team

Six years ago Sam Parry joined Intercare supporting their courier & mail and clinical waste divisions. His next move was to become an operations assistant where he gained an in-depth knowledge of specialist transport needs within the NHS and honed his service skills. He has since progressed to become operations manager for Intercare's People Services team.

Tell us about the role of People Services.

We provide non-emergency people transport within the regional PCTs. This ranges from patient discharges to home visits, and from a tailor-made transport solution for Future Pathways day centre in Macclesfield, to drivers for Mid Cheshire's out of hours GPs as part of the NEW Service (Nights, Evenings and Weekends).

What does the job of operations manager involve?

With a team of 17 drivers dedicated to the division I manage every job to ensure that customers get the

service they need. As far as possible we work within schedules, but service users also know that we do our utmost to accommodate ad hoc requests.

Do you provide out of hours cover?

Yes. Our services mirror the around the clock operation of the NHS so we provide cover day and night.

What are the responsibilities of getting the job right?

We are relied upon 100% so we have to get it right every time.

Within Intercare do you have other responsibilities?

Health and Safety plays an increasing part in my overall role. I work with Maggie Hutchinson, our human resources director, in developing stringent policies, processes and procedures. I also deliver regular training sessions which have instilled the H&S philosophy throughout the company.

Has specific H&S training been needed?

We take our responsibilities both to staff and customers very seriously, so I took the NEBOSH (National General Certificate in Occupational Health & Safety) qualification which goes beyond the basic requirements. On site I also undertake a fire marshal role.

Would you prefer to be a team player or an individual?

There is a place for both in this job. I certainly have my own responsibilities and ambitions, but these can only be achieved as part of a strong team that pulls together.

Out in the Community

It would be difficult to work within the NHS and not believe in social responsibility. Motivating and inspiring young people is one way in which Intercare demonstrates its social conscience. And this year it was awarded first prize in the Work Experience category of the Cheshire Positive Awards.

The nomination and award followed Intercare's continued involvement with young people from Springfield School in Crewe, from where students have been attending work placements over the past three years.

Liam Leach was the most recent student to take up a placement of extended work experience. Working with Intercare's regular drivers, Liam has been given hands-on experience on real routes and schedules to gain broad experience across the operation. Like all of Springfield's students he received an individual work programme and risk assessment to ensure he achieved his potential in a safe, controlled environment.

Maggie Hutchinson, Intercare's human resources director, said: "Liam has impressed us all by his willingness to contribute with all aspects of work from safe handling of waste to ensuring the correct paperwork is signed by customers.

"Beyond Springfield we are in our fifth year of offering work placements to mainstream students, we have recently expanded the scheme and intend to offer four places this year." she added.



Liam Leach (L) was on the road with driver Mark Evans

Diploma workshops

The launch of the new Society Health and Development diploma provided another opportunity for Intercare to support local schools. Workshops on infection control held on site by the company proved extremely useful for students from Shavington and Malbank.

The two workshops included a tour of the premises and a training session on the importance of infection control procedures and hand washing in the healthcare industry.