

Inhaler recycling service results in sustainability award

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Waste management service provider [Grundon](#)'s has reported that its inhaler recycling service has helped it win a sustainability award from the British Aerosol Manufacturers' Association (BAMA).

The event took place last month and saw the business rewarded for its overall commitment to environmental best practice as well as its ground-breaking inhaler recycling programme, which is expected to deliver significant carbon savings for the NHS.

The judges commented that the service: "... really addresses and solves an issue that hadn't been tackled before", and said: "...there is a minimal amount of gas left in each pack, but its environmental impact is significant especially looking at the millions of units used".

In addition, they applauded the scheme's "network of return points (pharmacies and hospitals)" as making it "easy" for users to drop off empty inhalers as they collect new ones, saying "it is likely that most empties will be captured".

Commercial manager Paul McConaghy said: "As a company we work really hard to ensure everything we do is as sustainable as possible, so it is very gratifying to be recognised with this award.

"Our new inhaler recycling service really is our icing on the cake right now and we are thrilled with its success. Since the launch we have received a huge number of enquiries from NHS Trusts and Health Boards nationwide and further afield, all of which are testament to the NHS's desire to do more to reduce carbon emissions."

Inhalers alone are estimated to account for 4% of all NHS CO₂ emissions and, with approximately 73m

inhalers dispensed every year, being able to capture those greenhouse gases is seen as an important step towards carbon cutting goals.

The scheme is mainly aimed at pressurised metered dose inhalers (pMDI), where the predominant propellant used is hydrofluoroalkane (HFA) 134a, which has a global warming potential 1,430 times the effect of carbon dioxide.

Currently, most inhalers are either thrown away in household general waste or returned to pharmacies for incineration as clinical waste. Now, every organisation that signs up to the new service is given a dedicated inhaler recycling container to store them until they can be collected.

They are then sent for processing at the company's specialist AeroPak recycling facility, which is capable of handling more than 200,000 inhalers a day. Both the plastic casings and the aluminium canisters are recycled, while the gases are safely captured and repurposed for use in the refrigeration industry, together making a significant contribution to the circular economy.