



The  
Queen's  
Nursing  
Institute

# Sustainability in Adult Social Care WEBINAR: Continence & Containment Products

## SUMMARY

Tuesday 19 March 2024  
5 - 6pm, via Zoom

#GreenerNursesandMidwiferyWeek  
#Sustainability



# 1. Chair's Welcome

Dr Amanda Young, QN, Director of Nursing Programmes, The QNI

- Welcome to everyone, sustainability is a hot topic nowadays, we hope you find this webinar helpful
- We're trying different times for the webinars to try and interact with as many people as possible.
- Our next webinar on sustainability in Adult Social Care is on Friday 22 March, from 12pm - 1pm and the theme is 'Reducing the use of gloves and plastics', to book your free place, go to:

<https://tinyurl.com/2czjxznq>

- Today's theme is 'continence and containment products' - currently managing incontinence mostly relies on disposable products - reusable options are available and growing in popularity - the drive towards sustainable health services has benefits for everyone.
- Thank you to our speakers today for their time and expertise.
- We have resources, blogs and a new innovation programme on sustainability, visit the QNI web pages here: <https://qni.org.uk/sustainability/>



# 1. Abena Healthcare

Sophie Singleton, Nurse Advisor, Abena UK

- I qualified as a nurse 18 years ago, but I've been doing care for longer than that. Before my role at Abena, I was a Sister and I've used lots of continence products in my work
- Abena was founded in 1953 in Denmark and is still run by the same family, they specialise in incontinence products. Being socially responsible is very important to the company and we are partnered with the Nordic Swan Ecolabel which is an environmental labelling scheme certifying that a product or service complies with the requirements for the label. 80% of our products carry the Nordic Swan label.
- We have 2 main products for incontinence: disposable and washable. There are several different types of disposable products, all in ones, pull up pants etc, they do create waste as they are just binned after single use, there's no recycling.
- Wastage is not sustainable, so it's important to have the correct size, regular checking of the wetness lines, the appropriate absorbency for the patient.
- Question why the patient needs a pad - might they need a commode or bed pan instead?
- We find that these washable product are great for patients with cognitive issues or dexterity issues.
- The washable option improve dignity, which is hugely important to patients' mental health, there's no regular waste so they are more sustainable.
- Find out more here: <https://www.abena.co.uk/sustainability>





## 2. Bladder & Bowel incontinence innovation project

Stefanie Barnish, Team Leader, Bladder & Bowel Specialist Nurse Community Services

- My colleague Gerry Rooke and I did a QNI Community Nursing Innovation project last year
- It led us to become finalists in the Burdett Nursing Awards last year which we're very proud of
- Our main aim was to improve patients' quality of life by ensuring early screening of continence status for all individuals living in a care home
- Patients not getting the opportunity to get an assessment, were often wearing the wrong sized pads, as well the incorrect pads. There was an assumption that they needed to wear a product. We also found there was a lack of knowledge and education for staff in care homes on bladder and bowel dysfunction.
- Incontinence is a symptom, not a disease or diagnosis and has many possible causes
- It affects quality of life, physical and mental health, sleep patterns, and increases isolation in general.
- Once a patient knows they have incontinence problems, they'll often avoid drinking or eating which will affect their health. It decreases motivation, increases apathy, and the risk of UTIs increases, all of this worsens incontinence.
- Poor continence care is very distressing to a patient and degrading for them, as well as creating other issues such as skin damage, pressure ulcers, falls. All of this is avoidable!
- The environmental impact of disposable products increase our carbon footprint so we need to find and use sustainable alternatives.



## 2. Bladder & Bowel incontinence innovation project

Stefanie Barnish, Team Leader, Bladder & Bowel Specialist Nurse Community Services

- Through the project, we improved access to knowledge and education for carers and residents
- We successfully implemented a screening tool with appropriate outcomes specific to the individual resident.
- We looked at screening tools and reviewed medication and made changes. We looked at the products and stopped some. We introduced toileting regimes, so there could be toilet prompting, which reduced the size of products.
- The continence screening tool can be found here:  
<https://tinyurl.com/5a5ymtsh>
- We identified a continence champion and she also supported other carers.
- We raised awareness of continence issues by producing and distributing a poster which we will continue doing
- We also identified the need for prevention e.g. pelvic floor education in maternity services and education in schools.
- We will continue using our continence screening tool on admission to care homes and will continue with the education delivery whilst remembering our overall aim: to improve people's quality of life for as long as possible.



### 3. Quality of Care

Heather Kirton, RGN Clinical Governance/Infection Prevention and Control Lead, St Monica Trust in conversation with Charlotte Fry, QN, Expert Nursing Lead, Infection Prevention & Control Champions Network, The QNI

- **Charlotte:** Welcome Heather, thank you for being here, would you like to introduce yourself?
- **Heather:** I work for a charitable care home provider group based in Bristol, I've been a nurse since 1989. I've always specialised in care of the elderly, I'm very passionate about that. It's about quality of care, it's a hot topic and we can make significant change.
- **Charlotte:** Working in a care home, can you give top tips in how to work more sustainably?
- **Heather:** One of the key things is working with a sustainable supplier. Our main company is ActiCare, and they in fact introduced us to Abena, our business models are closely aligned.
- I would also suggest that you get a full inventory and find out how much you spend, it's been a real eye-opener for me. The amount of containment we buy is staggering and then we think of all those yellow bags being bagged up and going to be incinerated or to landfills and it's horrifying.
- Education is important - it's about trying to prevent issues in the first place.



### 3. Quality of Care

- **Heather:** Launderable products are better, in the longer term they will save you money, but for the resident experience it's so much nicer to be wearing cotton and something that looks more like normal underwear rather than a nappy-looking product, it's so much more dignified.
- It's important to know what floats the decision-maker of your place of work: think about how to couch your case, it will help you achieve what you want to achieve.
- This is a good resource: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/excellence-in-contenance-care/>
- There are continence apps for professionals and service users now and of course the CQC will be including sustainability in their inspection criteria from next year, hopefully that will help drive change forward.
- The biggest driver for me was I was staggered by the amount of distressed behaviour charts that allude to episodes of continence. I was really taken back by number of periods of loose stools, correlated with bowel charts. Constipation can increase cognitive problems but my goodness we've gone to the other end of the scale and it showed me we need to do some medical reviews and look at diets and medication charts.
- It's really looking at individualised personal assessments and understanding what meets their needs most effectively.
- It's a big issue, we need to reduce our carbon footprint in this area.



**The next webinar is on 22 March 2024, 12-1pm**



**Book your free place here:**

<https://qni.org.uk/news-and-events/events/sustainability-in-adult-social-care-reducing-the-use-of-gloves-and-plastics/>