

Transforming Continence Care in Community Healthcare – A Value-Based Procurement Success

Overview

In a collaborative effort between Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust and continence care supplier Essity, a **Value Based Procurement (VBP)** pilot project was launched to explore new ways of delivering **continence care in care homes** that prioritise patient outcomes and system-wide efficiency.

This pilot supports the ambitions of the NHS's 2025 Health Plan – 'Fit for the Future' by shifting care from hospital to community, empowering staff, and delivering better outcomes through value-based approaches. It also builds on the foundations laid by the NHS Long Term Plan (2019), which called for more integrated, personalised care.

The pilot achieved strong results that:

Improved patient experience and comfort – 100% reduction in leakages, better skin health, and increased independence.

Reduced staffing resource requirements – 47% less time spent on continence care, freeing up clinical capacity.

Lower overall cost of care – Over £500 saved in 24 hours, with projected annual savings of more than £188,000.

Supported NHS sustainability goals – Over 4,000 kg of CO₂ emissions saved annually through reduced laundry and product use.

This collaboration serves as a model for how trusts and suppliers can work together to drive innovation in community healthcare.

"This pilot is a great example of how NHS organisations can use our frameworks to drive innovation and improve outcomes. It shows how working in partnership Value-Based Procurement can unlock better care, better value, and better use of resources—exactly what the NHS needs right now."

Robert Owen, Category Manager for Urology and Bowel Management, NHS Supply Chain

The Challenge

Before the pilot, Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust sought to address several persistent challenges in continence care. Residents presented a wide range of needs, from full independence to requiring mechanical hoists and two carers for support.

The baseline data, collected over a 24-hour period, revealed:

High Product Usage: 81 continence products were used across the cohort in a single day.

Frequent Leakages: 54 leakages were recorded, leading to increased laundry needs and discomfort for residents.

Skin Integrity Issues: Three residents had existing skin damage linked to leakage and product fit.

Labour-Intensive Care: Staff spent over 8 hours per day on continence care, with many residents requiring two carers for each change.

Limited Independence: Only one resident was fully independent in managing their continence needs.

Low Staff Satisfaction: Carers reported challenges with product fit and ease of use, particularly during nighttime care.

The Aim

The aim of the pilot was to improve patient dignity and comfort, while supporting staff to deliver care more efficiently and lower overall system costs—without compromising clinical outcomes.

By applying a VBP approach, focusing on outcomes rather than unit costs, the trust and supplier aimed to demonstrate how smarter, more personalised continence care could deliver better value for patients, staff, and the wider system.

The Solution

To address the challenges identified during the initial phase, Leeds Community Healthcare NHS Trust partnered with a supplier from our compliant frameworks to pilot a new approach to continence care.

The pilot began with a group of 19 care home residents and explored how personalised continence products and care routines could improve patient wellbeing, support staff in delivering care more effectively, and lower environmental impact.

Working closely together, the trust's Clinical team and the Supplier's healthcare specialists carried out detailed continence assessments for each resident. These assessments helped tailor product prescriptions to individual needs, aiming to improve comfort, reduce leakage, and support greater independence.

The supplier completed patient profiles, conducted assessments, and analysed data collected before and after the pilot. This collaborative approach saved the Trust's Assistant Practitioner an estimated two days of clinical time.

We delivered this pilot in close collaboration with a supplier, leveraging a unique partnership to co-develop a model that is both scalable and adaptable. While the principles and outcomes are applicable across the NHS, the success of this approach reflects the depth of collaboration and shared expertise. The model offers a robust framework for other trusts and care settings aiming to enhance continence care through Value-Based Procurement (VBP).

The pilot ran over a one-week evaluation period, with consistent data collection methods used throughout to ensure reliable comparisons. The results showed clear improvements in clinical outcomes, staff efficiency, and environmental impact.

“Working in partnership with the trust allowed us to demonstrate the real-world impact of value-based care. By focusing on outcomes rather than just product cost, we were able to support better patient experiences, reduce clinical workload, and deliver measurable savings. This is what Value-Based Procurement is all about.”

Richard Maddison, PAMA and Strategic Healthcare Manager, Essity

The Results

The pilot focused on optimising continence care through personalised product selection and improved care processes. The results were compelling:

Patient Benefits

- **100% Reduction in Leakages:** No leakages were recorded post-intervention, compared to 54 during the baseline.
- **Improved Skin Health:** All three patients with pre-existing skin damage showed improvement, with no deterioration across the cohort.
- **Increased Independence:** 42% of residents became more independent in managing their continence needs, with two becoming fully independent.
- **Enhanced Dignity and Comfort:** Better product fit and reduced need for changes contributed to improved resident experience.
- **Higher Staff Satisfaction:** Carer satisfaction with continence products rose from 10% to 95%, an 850% increase.

Financial Savings

- **£517 Saved in 24 Hours:** Equivalent to over £188,000 in annual savings across product use, staff time, and laundry.
- **£102.60 saved on product change time.**
- **£364.50 saved on managing leakages.**
- **£43.20 saved through reduced carer support needs.**
- **Cost-Neutral Product Use:** While product costs increased slightly by £0.23 per day, this was offset many times over by operational savings.

These figures were calculated using standard NHS assumptions, including a £27 hourly nursing rate and average times for care tasks.

Sustainability Benefits

11.2 kg CO₂ saved in 24 hours, equivalent to 4,086 kg CO₂ saved annually across laundry and product use.

- 3,715 kg CO₂ saved from reduced laundry needs
- 371 kg CO₂ saved from more efficient product use
- 12% reduction in emissions, supporting NHS net zero goals.

These calculations were based on carbon factors from product Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs) and standard laundry emissions data.

Supporting Information:

[Savings presentation](#): *LEEDS TENA VBP Results.pptx* (Slide 14)

Carbon factors and product declarations: [EPD Library – Essity](#).

(Search “Essity” to view relevant EPDs for continence products)

This transparent approach ensures Trusts can understand how sustainability savings were calculated and replicate the model confidently.

Next Steps

This pilot serves as a blueprint for trusts looking to enhance continence care through VBP principles.

Community healthcare providers interested in exploring similar initiatives are encouraged to reach out for guidance on implementation strategies and evaluation methods.

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