

An update- Reusable name and role, colour-coded theatre caps

Liverpool University Hospital NHS Trust
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Royal Liverpool Hospital is one of the sites of the Liverpool University Hospital NHS Trust where the initial implementation of reusable theatre caps was made in May 2021.

The caps were rolled out to all the Anaesthetic Consultants and from there, approval was given for all theatre staff which includes Surgeons, Scrub nurses, ODPS and HCAs etc. At first, there was some resistance to the initiative and many staff members refused to change to reusable hats with names and roles on, but as this became the norm, a wider acceptance to the change started to occur and those who initially refused to change to them, actively requested them as they felt left out and wanted to become part of the greener regime.

My research into costs and figures showed that the annual expenditure on disposable caps was approximately £25,000, before the introduction of fabric caps.

There are several reasons why reusable caps are the way forward and enhancing patient safety is just one of them. According to the WHO, 70% of adverse incidents in healthcare occur due to miscommunication. Other benefits in changing to named reusable caps from single use caps include: a reduction in hospital waste, long term cost savings and allaying patient anxiety.

Comments from theatre staff:

- “They are a great communication tool, everyone in the team knows each person’s role”.
- “Really helpful to remember everyone’s name”.
- “They are comfortable and environmentally friendly and in situations where we are working with different teams and unfamiliar colleagues, they improve communication”.
- “The caps create a feeling of a unified workforce representing roles within the departments”.
- “They enable clear communication especially in emergencies where timing is key to address specific individuals and calling them by name is important”.
- “I find the names really helpful on a human factors level, the different colours help distinguish different members of the team”.
- “They reduce communication barriers between different staffing levels allowing everyone to speak up, this is especially important in emergency situations and leads to enhancement of patient care “.

Comments from speaking with patients:

- All patients we spoke with thought having our names and roles on the caps was a great idea.
- Patients explained that it was easier to remember the names of the clinicians looking after them.
- “Very nice, don’t have to worry about remembering the names after the initial introduction”.
- “Very helpful because half of the time you forget who everyone is and knowing who is looking after me makes me feel better and less anxious”.

Financial information

Breakdown of spend on reusable caps:

Year	Spend (£)
2021	£5312.70
2022	£4799.79
2023	£3627.59

Total spend = £13,740.08

Breakdown of spend on disposable caps:

Year	Spend (£)
2021	£17,327.74 (this figure is likely to reflect the ongoing impact of Covid)
2022	£15,734.46
2023	£7,896.20

Total = £40,958.40.

Usual spend on disposable caps prior to the first implementation of reusables in February 2021 was approximately £25,000/ year

Breakdown of savings on caps since introducing reusable name and role caps:

Year Saving (£) Figures have been rounded to the nearest pound

2021 £2,361

2022 £4,467

2023 £13,477

Saving over 3 years = £20,305.

Notes to add

- Reusable theatre caps are not ordered for students or visitors, only permanent members of staff so disposables still need to be purchased.

- Saving on disposing of the single-use caps should also be considered and added to the overall savings.