

## Improving infection control and patient dignity

### Acclaim for Silentia screens installed at Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust's new hospital.

Installing Silentia screens at recently opened North Walsham Hospital has won plaudits from patients, their visitors and clinical staff alike. "The screens are easier to clean than curtains and there are no delays in patient admissions," Beth Kimber, head of infection prevention and control at Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust, told *Inside Hospitals*.

### INCREASED PRIVACY AND PATIENT DIGNITY

Highlighting other key benefits, Belinda Williamson, modern matron at North Walsham Hospital, added: "Silentia are more robust and give increased privacy and patient dignity. "In the old hospital, we had different height curtain rails and different lengths of curtains. The curtains were heavy too. A porter had to assist staff when we needed to take the curtains down and replace them. Plus we had to send them away to the laundry for cleaning. We also had to have a spare pair on the ward in case we had an infection, and as they were quite large they were bulky for storage. The curtains were also not in line with the beds, due to infection control requirements



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for increased space bed spacing." Belinda added: "We had considered using disposable curtains, but they were costly and we would have had to change the tracking. They were also expensive if we had to replace them after an outbreak.

"Patients said the curtains we had did not fit and did not make them feel secure. They also felt that people could hear through them when they were with visitors or clinical staff. The curtains moved all the time if there was a breeze.

"They all like the Silentia screens," said Belinda. "There are four four bedded wards here and eight side rooms. All the ward beds

have the screens. "They are good, really easy to move. There's a lock on the brake. You can take the castors off to clean them. Clinical staff say patients feel the screens are better for or their privacy and are easier to clean." Infection prevention and control nurse Jackie Thomas first saw the screens at an exhibition staged as part of a Showcase Hospital event and described them to Beth Kimber.

### THE PRESENTATION AND TESTING CONVINCED US

"We're always on the look out for new ways to improve infection prevention and control,



and had the ideal opportunity to have them here as we were building new," said Beth "We arranged a presentation by Silentia's Tim Clarke who brought some screens. We invited clinical staff to have a look and to give us their views. They liked them, but weren't really sure until they saw them fixed to the wall when they were installed." Belinda explained: "I was just a bit concerned about whether the screens might tip over, but as they're fixed to the wall at one end there are no issues. Staff have soon got used to them and like them. The wards look open and uncluttered. It's a lot neater.

"The use of the screens is part of the training. Tim trained Mandy Mills, the ward manager, in the correct use of the screens – it's very straightforward. Mandy cascades the training down to staff."

### DISCRETE WHEN NOT IN USE

When not required, the screens discretely fold back to give the wards a spacious, uncluttered look. This is aided by the white coloured screen specified for North Walsham.

However, for those who like a splash of colour a range of options is available, as are different screen sizes and styles. Now, whenever they are required at North Walsham, the Silentia screens are simply moved into position and the castor brake locked. Two screens can be used to com-

pletely close off a bed if required. Each four-bedded ward also has a mobile screen which can be positioned to make the screened-off area larger.

One enthusiast was patient Myra Bannon (pictured above), who said: "They're no problem at all. I've had lots of visitors – family and friends. It's easy to close off the bed – the screens make it nice and private. You can have a conversation in confidence."

Beth Kimber explained: "The trust purchased the screens as part of the new build. The delivery all went fine, and Tim was always on hand if we needed him. In time there will be a cost benefit as we will not need to replace them. "The screens give patients confidence that they're not going to blow open, as curtains might, if they are receiving any personal care. Certainly when visitors or staff see a patient it's more private and they can hold conversations in confidence. "Between patients the screens are cleaned by hotel services, and at anytime if they are marked or splashed. If there is an outbreak the screens are wiped down with a chlorine releasing agent. The detachable castors can be thoroughly cleaned too."

Beth added: "Other staff see this as a flagship building and they appreciate the benefits of the screens. There's one more hospital that's waiting approval, we'll be putting Silentia screens in there, and I think



Beth Kimber, left, Head of Infection Prevention and Control, Norfolk Community Health and Care NHS Trust; and Belinda Williamson, right, Modern Matron, North Walsham Hospital.

they'll be featured in other hospitals in any new refurbishments in the future. The whole infection prevention and control team recommends them now – particularly for the ease of cleaning."

Tim Clarke, a director of Silentia UK, explained: "The screens can be used in line with the regulations on hospital beds and spacing. There are two heights, a choice of colours and different styles of screen." The typical questions I'm asked are: 'Can they be cleaned? Will they go around the bed? Do they stop sound travel? Are they easy to use and can they be used for what they were designed for?'

The answer is 'yes' to every question. "A number of hospitals and clinics across the UK are already appreciating the benefits the screens offer – just like the patients and staff at North Walsham."