



THE CASE FOR REUSABLE GOWNS

There's another way. There's a better way.

How **BS EN 13795 compliant, commercially launderable, reusable gowns** can save you money, help the environment and provide healthcare workers with better levels of comfort, quality and protection.

Introduction

The Textile Services Association (TSA) represents the UK commercial laundry industry. This industry plays a central role in the government's strategy to replace single use gowns with reusable gowns delivering a permanent long-term, cost-effective and sustainable solution to the entire healthcare sector.

This briefing document is intended to help inform the market as to why using multi-use gowns is the obvious choice of a solution. We are not reinventing the wheel, reusable gowns have been used in the UK for over 20 years, however it seems at the first peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020, everything went disposable as a result of some poor and misinformed decision making within various government departments. Every aspect of the solution laid out in the following pages (ranging from manufacturing, laundering to recycling at end-of-life) is already available in an existing chain of supply in the UK.

The key benefits from making the switch to reusable gowns....



In addition, the benefits of switching to a commercially launderable and reusable gown are significant on various fronts:

- **Save healthcare establishments (and the government) millions of pounds a year**
- **Solves supply issues for healthcare front-line workers on a long-term basis**
- **Use an existing tried and tested solution** (30% of NHS estate already use reusable surgical gowns)
- **Gowns can be fully recycled at end-of-life**
- **Removes 45 million* tonnes of clinical waste per year**
- **Ability to provide every nursing home, care home, primary care centre with a reusable gown service**
- **CE marked and conforming to BS EN 13795 so fully compliant with international and national regulations and standards, from manufacture to end-of-life (surgical gowns compliant with QMS standard EN 13485)**
- **Utilise an existing UK supply chain**
- **Levelling up of jobs and support British manufacturing and service providers**

*All numbers based on April 2020 demand of 460,000 items per day (Source: Cabinet Office)

A Marked Contrast

SPOT THE DIFFERENCES

Although there are few visible differences, reusable gowns are far superior in quality and much more comfortable to wear than single-use gowns.

A more tangible difference would be the significantly reduced cost per use, and eliminating the monumental amount of single-use garments that would be sent for incineration. No prizes for spotting them all but the notable benefits from multi-use gowns are easy to see.

DISPOSABLE SINGLE-USE GOWN

CAN ONLY BE USED ONCE

SURGICAL / ISOLATION

CAN BE USED **once.**

AFTER ONE USE GOES FOR **INCINERATION**

REUSABLE MULTI-USE GOWN

CAN BE EITHER SURGICAL OR ISOLATION SUBJECT TO COMPLIANT PROCESS

CAN BE USED **+70** TIMES

AFTER EACH USE GOES FOR **LAUNDERING** THEN RETURNED TO BE USED AGAIN

AT END OF LIFE TEXTILES ARE **RECYCLED** THEN MADE INTO **NEW GOWNS** & THE CYCLE STARTS AGAIN

"Thank you for ordering the reusable gowns, they are much more comfortable to use."

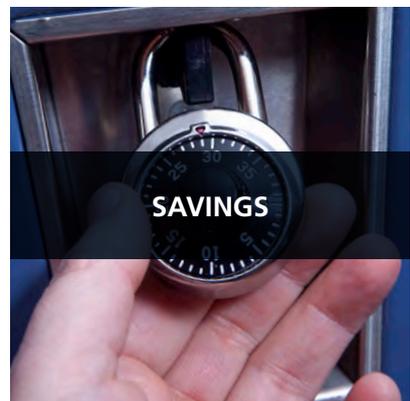
AICU Clinical Governance Team/Senior Sister in Adult ICU, April 2020

The Financial Benefits

A look at the numbers makes for a compelling argument. As the graphics below demonstrate, the value proposition from switching from single-use to reusable really is significant. If we are honest, we just do not understand why anyone would still buy a single-use solution. In addition to the huge savings, when you factor in that all these gowns can be made and processed in the UK, it just adds even more weight to the argument for multi-use gowns.

"At last there seems to be some sensible, joined-up thinking again regarding the manufacturing of reusable PPE gowns in the UK. It great that responsible purchasing requirements can still be achieved during these unprecedented times."

Linen Services General Manager, Royal Devon & Exeter NHS Trust, November 2020



Includes:

-  Purchase
-  Delivery
-  Waste Collection
-  Waste Incineration

Includes:

-  Purchase
-  Processing

Costs:

£1.7bn
per year

Costs:

£400m
per year

Estimated Total:

£1.2bn
per year

*All numbers based on April 2020 demand of 460,000 items per day (Source: Cabinet Office)

The Environmental Benefits

How does single-use affect the environment? Well it's no surprise to say it's not great! Single-use gowns are worn once, then disposed of and then incinerated. This process is unsustainable and has far-reaching negative impacts on the environment. There are major environmental considerations to encourage reusable products on such a scale. At the moment, millions of PPE gowns are being incinerated every week.

The amount of wastage that the current process creates is quite staggering. Gowns, based on a weight of 250g per piece, will generate over 115 tonnes of textiles per day in our healthcare system. Total clinical gown waste (including top up) will produce 45 million tonnes per year. The majority PPE is currently being airfreighted into the UK. Not the most energy or cost efficient mode of transport for the delivery of a disposable garment which is worn once then thrown away!

Reusable gowns are a sustainable and long-term solution. As well as being made by fully recyclable textiles, gowns can be easily integrated into existing infrastructures and transport logistics.



DISPOSABLE GOWNS
(based on 250g weight)
generate over



115
tonnes
PER DAY



TOTAL CLINICAL WASTE
(including top up) **produces**



45m tonnes
PER YEAR



REUSABLE GOWN
(commercial grade rPET yarn)



100%
recyclable

at **end-of-life** and made
BACK INTO NEW GOWNS

EXISTING SUPPLIERS
(from offshore/overseas)



Most PPE is
airfreight

Manufacturing Requirements

Whatever type of gown you choose, the garment needs to be CE marked and conform to BS EN 13795 which is a medical device standard. Some countries are taking an alternative approach and producing a simpler PPE isolation gown which may open up alternative supply routes.

GOWN REQUIREMENTS

Currently millions of disposable gowns are being procured every month. By switching to reusable gowns, the total UK stock requirement would be estimated at under 4 million pieces. Some top up stock would need to be injected each month to cover stock loss, but this is a minuscule amount when compared to single-use consumption.

FABRIC REQUIREMENTS

Each gown requires approximately 1.9 metres of the specific fabric. Therefore, total fabric meterage would be 7.6 million as per the estimates above. This may sound like a lot, but actually it's a tiny percentage of the current fabric usage.

Where can the gowns be made?

Most of the single-use gowns have been made offshore although some are now being manufactured in the UK.

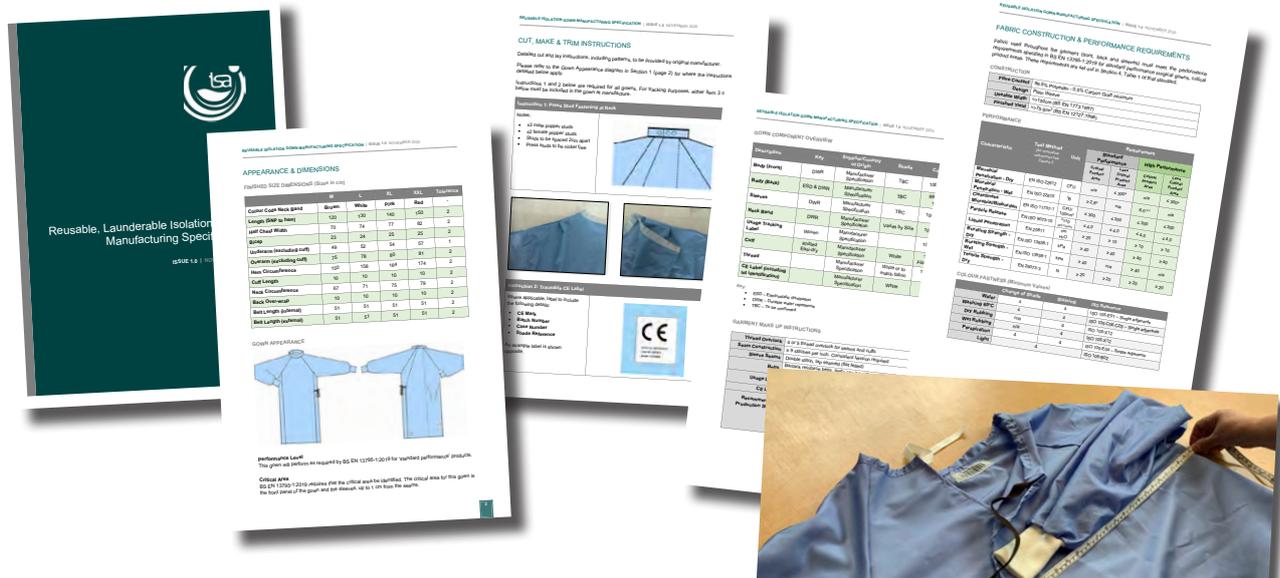
However, **the gown is not a complex garment and can be easily made** - but it is essential it is manufactured to the standard through a certified process.

The UK has many well-established, certified manufacturers who can make, manage and source all of the requirements for the marketplace. The map illustrates certified fabric and garment manufacturers.



Specification & Standards

A detailed reusable, launderable gown manufacturing specification has been drawn up by the TSA and is available upon request. The gown conforms to current NHS safety requirements and will complement existing stock in circulation. It is also compliant with **BS EN 13795**.



The gown includes the following specifications:

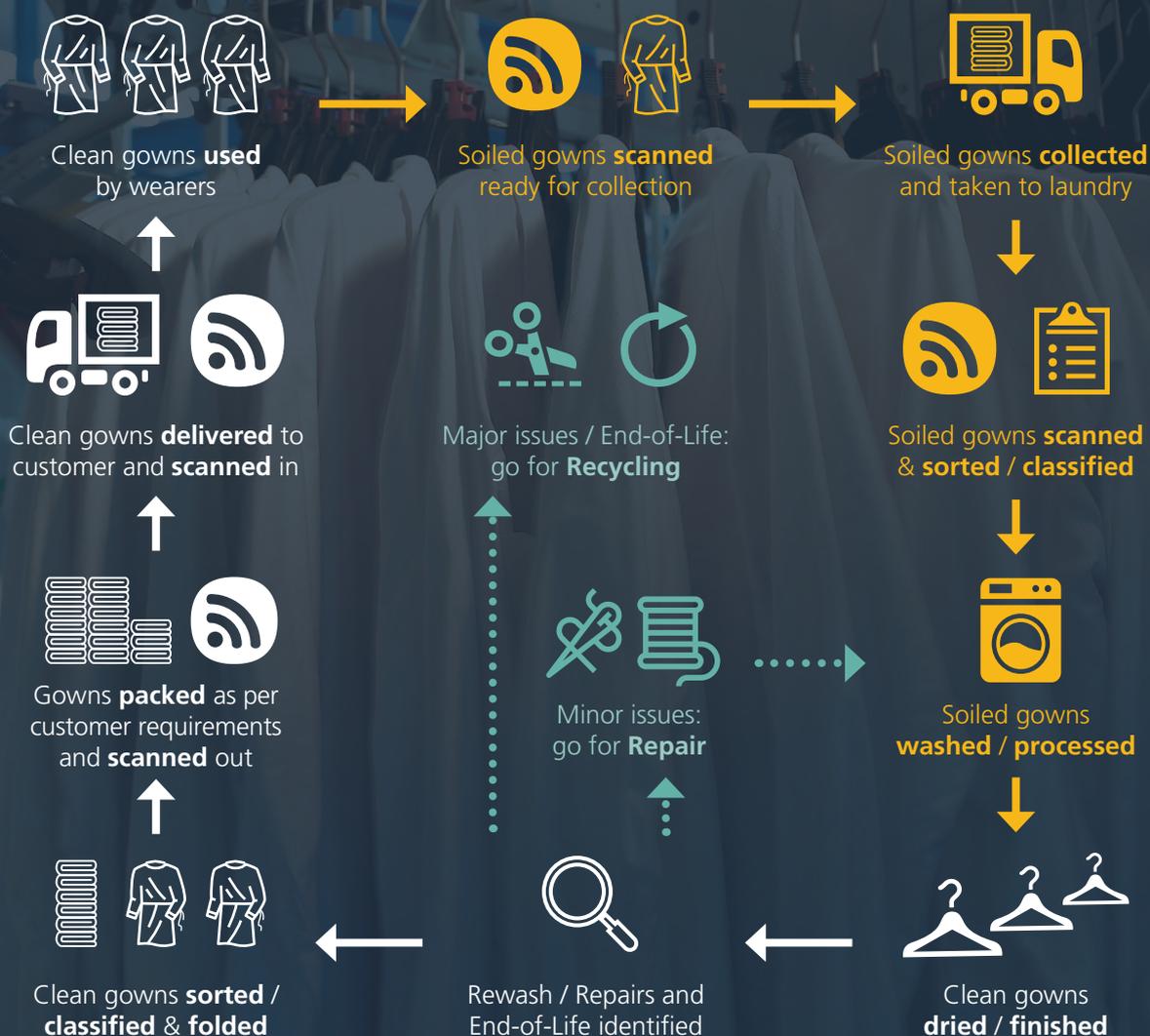
- Designed to be fully recycled
- CE marked and BS EN 13795 compliant
- Lightweight & comfortable garment
- Breathable & fluid repellent fabric
- Latex-free fabric
- Visible size neck colour codes
- Traceability label (proving origin)
- Usage tracking grid, barcode or transponder according to user requirements
- Proven for 70+ commercial laundry cycles

Laundry Matters

All reusable gowns will obviously need a laundry service provider and whether that's an in-house on-premise laundry or outsourced to a commercial laundry, it's really important they are engaged as early in your decision-making process as possible.

KEEPING ON TRACK Your laundry needs to be able to track the number of processes the gown has had. This can be achieved by either using a label, barcode or a RFID tag. Different laundries operate different scanning methods, but either process saves time and money and results in a more efficient service. It's also really important the process is certified to both maintain the integrity of the gown and also hygienic levels of processing. There are existing operational standards for healthcare laundries, including **EN 14065** and the **DHSC HTM 01-04**. Surgical gowns are required to process in line with BS EN13795 and other QMS which require specialist processing capabilities. During the last six months the TSA has introduced a new processing standard **IHLC** which is an interim standard which includes essential elements of **HTM 01-04** and is a stepping stone to achieving **BS EN 14065**. This has enabled more laundries to be able to offer an isolation gown processing service. A typical commercial laundry processing service is shown below.

TYPICAL COMMERCIAL LAUNDRY SERVICE CYCLE FOR ISOLATION GOWNS



Surgical gown processing will require specialised laundering process facilities including sterilisation.

Laundry Matters ...cont'd

LOCATION, LOCATION...

Is there a laundry near you?

Yes! There will almost certainly be a laundry near you who can help.

They are specialists with a wealth of knowledge and expertise. They will be able to offer advice and guidance at every stage and provide a professional, reliable, reassuring laundry service to your healthcare establishment.

Certified sites guarantee to be operating to either BS EN 14065 or TSA/NHSI Interim Healthcare Laundry Certification. Both certifications schemes are compliant with HTM 01-04. For surgical gowns processing, there will be a requirement for specialised laundry processing. Please note less laundries provide this service, please contact us for details.

The map opposite shows the locations of laundries throughout the UK.



"Laundries play a critical role in any successful healthcare business. The services provided by a professional laundry offer a consistent quality of service and hygienic peace of mind. They're part of a process that should not be taken for granted, their services help to keep staff and patients safe."

David Stevens, TSA CEO, November 2020

Considerations for Laundry and Distribution

For most NHS trusts hospitals it would simply require a switchover to reusable gowns with no change to existing arrangements as procedures will already be in place. We do need to make sure the end users know they are reusable!

For care homes and nursing homes and primary care facilities who may not be used to being supplied by a laundry service, an installation process would be implemented. This will include each establishment being briefed on operational arrangements, collection, distribution and bagging. Frequency of service would also be agreed.

The End Users

There may, perhaps understandably, be some resistance to the perceived concept of 'second-hand' PPE, particularly if people are used to using brand new items every time.

The TSA can provide a range of support material to help communicate the control procedures and hygiene processes in place to provide the reusable, long-lasting and launderable gown service.



Further Information

NEXT STEPS

We welcome talking in more detail to see what we can do to help.

You can get in touch with a manufacturer or laundry directly, or alternatively to find out more information, please contact the **TSA** and we will be able to introduce you to a range of laundries, fabric and gown manufacturers that can help you and your business.



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