



# Exploring clinical and non-clinical waste from home nutritional care

## PINNT update Survey 2025 Highlights

### Authors

Mr Steven Pearson-Brown, RNutr. MSc. PINNT General Secretary

Mrs Carolyn Wheatley, MBE, PINNT Chair



## Background

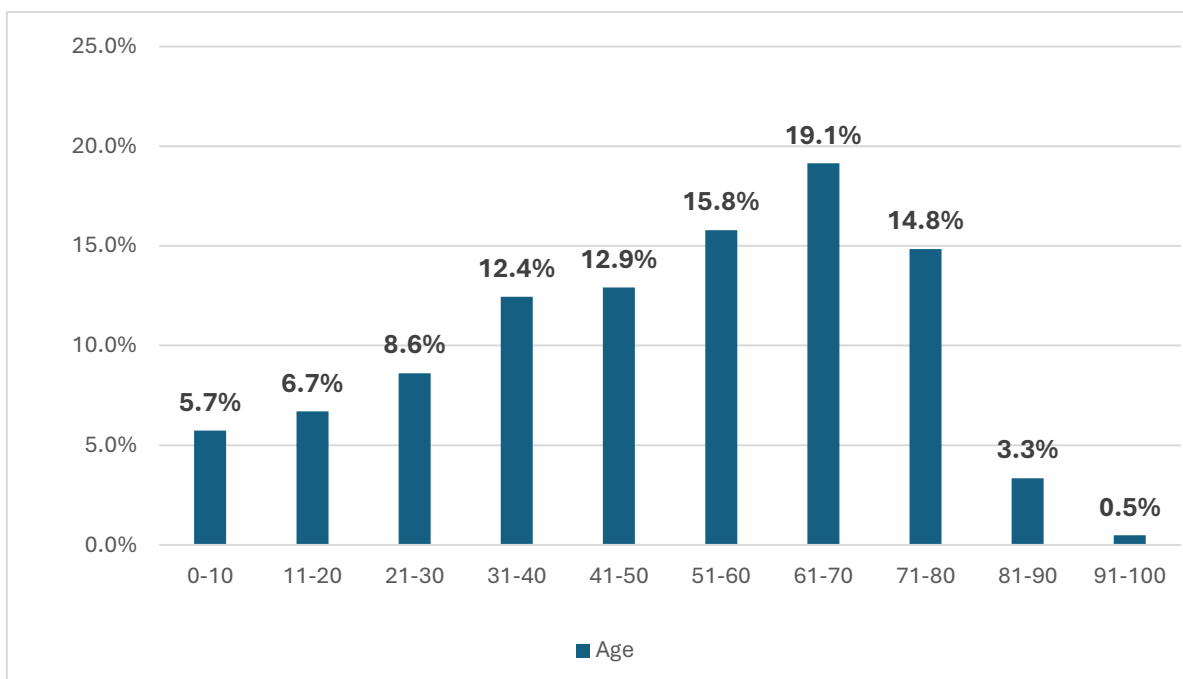
People who receive Home Nutrition Support (HNS) often deal with a lot of equipment, packaging, and deliveries. In 2024, PINNT and BAPEN ran the first UK-wide survey to understand how this affects patients – especially around waste, recycling, and delivery problems.

The NHS aims to reduce its carbon footprint to net zero by 2045, but healthcare supply chains – including Home Nutrition Support (HNS) – generate significant waste [9]. To understand the current impact on those receiving HNS and to review whether anything has changed, an update was disseminated to the members of PINNT, asking people receiving HNS and their carers about their experiences with sustainability.

HNS includes a range of treatment(s) used to reduce the risk of malnutrition (undernutrition) and improve nutritional state. These treatments often require prescribed products such as home parenteral support (HPS), home enteral tube feeding (HETF) and oral nutritional supplements (ONS). To administer these prescribed products, ancillaries are necessary. It is these treatments which will be considered in this survey. [1-8]

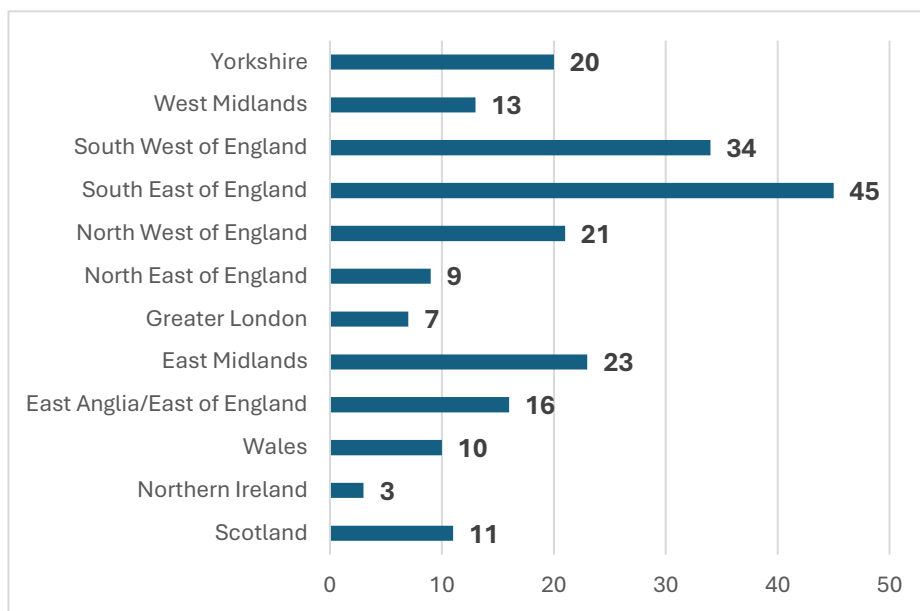
## Who Took Part in the Survey?

**Age demographic:** The ages of the respondents are outlined in figure one, which includes all treatment types. The largest age group for the use of HNS was 51-60 years, with 61-70 years being the second most common age group.



**Locality:** The majority of respondents reported that they resided in England (89%), with the distribution across the country outlined in the graph below. From those in England, most were found to live in the Southeast of England (45 people), with the Northwest of England being second with 34 people. Fewer respondents were living in the Greater London area (7 people). 24 respondents were from the devolved

nations of the United Kingdom, with 11 respondents from Scotland, 10 from Wales and 3 from Northern Ireland.



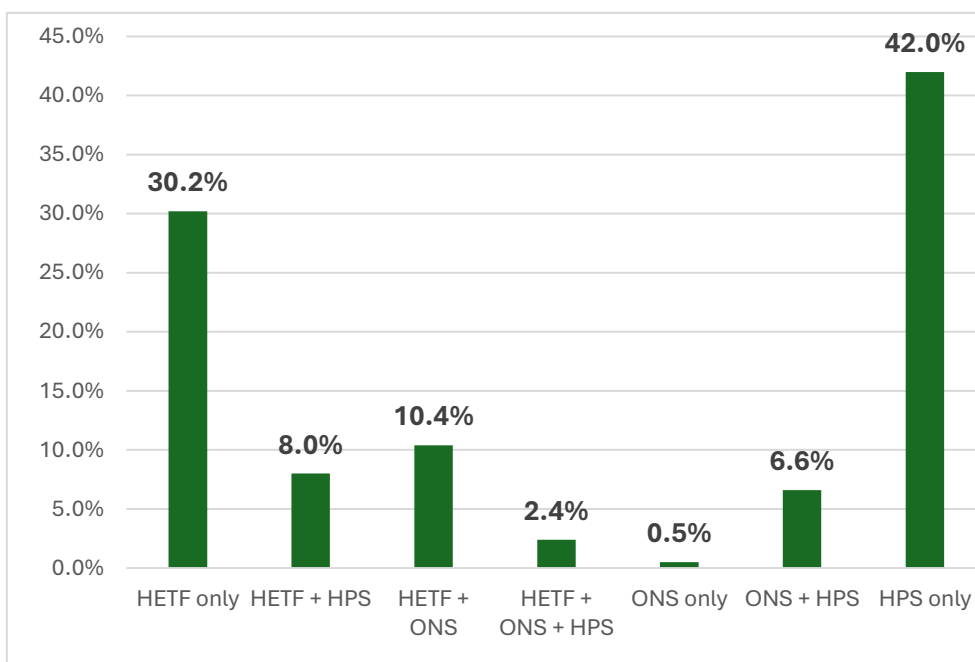
### HNS type

Many of those requiring more than one type of HNS; 27% (59 people). Those receiving the three treatment types overall were:

- 58.5% (125 people) were individuals receiving HPS\*
- 50.9% (108 people) were individuals receiving HETF\*
- 19.8% (42 people) were individual receiving ONS\*

*\*(exclusively or as part of their HNS)*

A more detailed breakdown of the respondents receiving the various treatment is shown in the graph below. The graph highlights how varied and complex people’s nutritional needs can be.



## What has changed since 2024?

The respondents highlighted that there is very little change compared to 2024, with many respondents highlighting that in some areas things have become worse, across all treatment types. The respondents highlighted key areas:

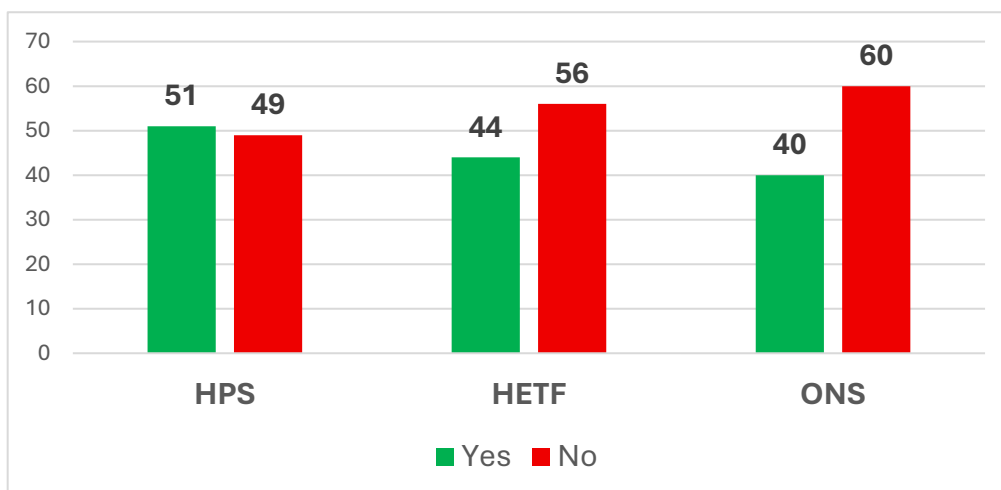
- Deliveries are still unreliable
- Waste has not reduced
- Packaging is still excessive
- Communication from homecare companies is poor
- Any improvements are due to individual staff, not the system

There were some similarities across treatment, but some variation also.

HEFT	HPS	ONS
Deliveries arriving in random amounts	No real change	No change
Missing items	More packaging and more waste	Some packaging changes that did not reduce waste
Needing several deliveries to complete one order	Declining service quality	More delivery problems
Feeling “trapped at home” waiting for couriers	More frequent deliveries due to supply issues	A few positive experiences with specific providers
No progress on sustainability or recycling	Occasional improvement linked mainly to helpful staff	

## Delivery accuracy in 2025

Delivery issues were a key concern in the 2024 survey and respondents reported that this was still an issue across all treatments in the update. Little to no improvement was found since the original survey, with those receiving the full and correct delivery by treatment type shown below. As demonstrated the accuracy of deliveries is less than 50% across all treatments. This is a clear a driver for increase costs, the generation of waste, increase resource burden and a potential patient safety issue.



## What were the problems encountered with the deliveries?

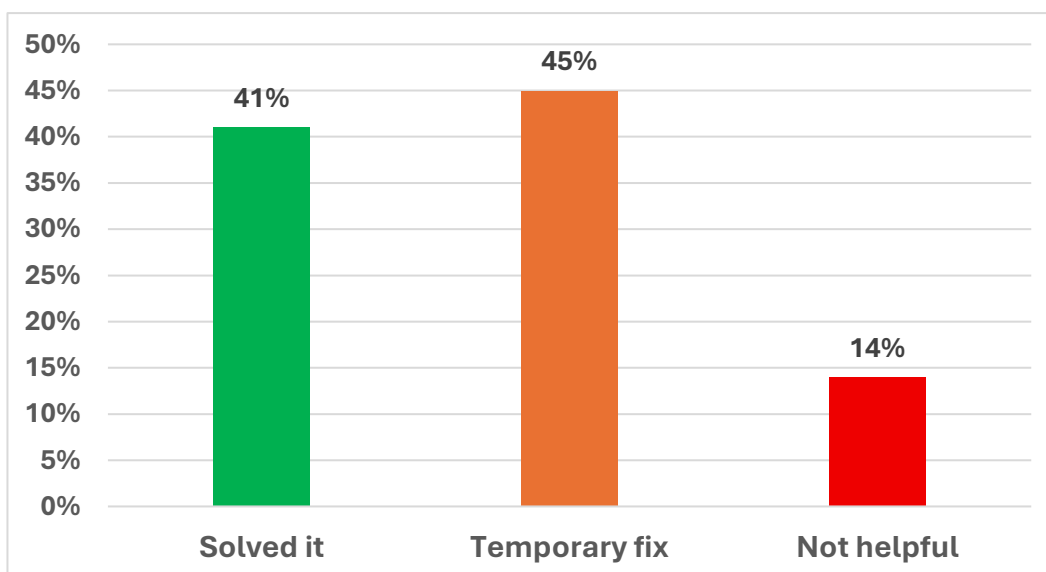
Multiple problems were identified, similar to the 2024 findings, ranging from delivery of incorrect or damaged items, substitutions of items due to supply chain issues, and the requirement for multiple, and additional deliveries to fulfil the patients complete prescription.



## How did those experiencing problems find solutions?

Variation in how respondents reported managing any problems. The majority reached out to their homecare company, but also, many contacted their clinical team for support.

When advice was given, it was found to be inconsistent and often only a temporary fix (45%). Sometimes the advice which was given was not helpful at all (14%). 41% of respondents did find that after reaching out for support the issue was resolved, but this would have likely required additional resources and in some cases additional deliveries to solve the problem.



## Waste and recycling

**Clinical & non-clinical waste:** Respondents reported no change in the advice which they were given regarding what constitutes as clinical waste. This sees individuals making assumptions which could have a safety and environment impact, as well as financial repercussions associated with the incorrect management of the physical waste to HNS.

**Recycling:** Most people received no advice on recycling, but when advice was given, it was also varied and not consistent.

Typically, items which respondents reported regularly recycling include:

- Bottles
- Cardboard
- Some plastics

Item	HPS	HETF	ONS
Feed bottles	✓	✓	✓
Cardboard boxes	✓	✓	✓
Paper packaging	✓	✓	✓
Hard plastic trays	✓	✓	Sometimes
Soft plastics	Sometimes	Sometimes	Rare
Syringes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Rare
Giving sets	✗	✗	N/A

Similar to 2024, barriers to recycling were identified, specifically:

- What is and is not allowed to be recycled from a clinical perspective
- What the local councils rules are
- How to store the waste for recycling until it can be disposed of
- Physical challenges to washing and sorting waste for recycling

It was clear that respondents are trying to be more environmentally aware, with an interest in recycling as much of the waste generated as possible, but the lack of communication, coordination and collaboration in this area is causing confusion, complications and challenges to doing so.

## The emotional and practical burden

Respondents to the 2024 survey drew attention to the emotional and practical burden of not only being reliant on HNS, but also the additional burden generated by the topics discussed. This was still the case in the update with patients describing feeling of:

- Being overwhelmed by the amount of waste

- Guilt about environmental impact
- Stress from unreliable deliveries
- Anxiety at the possibility of essential nutrition being delayed
- Having their homes overtaken with boxes and packaging, a little like “managing a warehouse”

## What patients want organisations to understand

To end the 2025 survey, respondents were asked what they would like key stakeholders to be aware.

### Healthcare professionals

- Understand the actual amount of waste patients must manage
- Recognise the emotional impact of delivery failures
- Provide clear recycling guidance
- Ensure prescriptions are correct and timely

### Homecare companies

- Reduce excessive packaging
- Improve delivery accuracy
- Communicate clearly about stock issues with patient, not just the healthcare professionals
- Stop relying on patients to fix system errors, but involve them in identifying issues and potential solutions
- Provide coordinated and consistent recycling information on items used

### Local commissioners

- Understand the financial cost of waste as an important factor in decision making
- The homecare company to be held accountable for repeated errors, through external auditing, patient and healthcare feedback and a process for which escalation can be implemented in the situation of persistent failures
- Improve recycling and waste collection options
- Recognise that delivery failures can be costly, dangerous and a patient safety concern

## What Happens Next?

These findings show that respondents continue to wish to be part of making HNS more sustainable, but that clearer guidance and more reliable deliveries are needed for this to happen. Specifically, it is shown that there is a need for:

- **Communication:** Clearer and improved communication across all levels of the service, with consistent and practical information on appropriate waste disposal and stock management in order to reduce unnecessary waste, both in terms of physical waste and wasted resources.
- **Coordination:** Effective and coordinated research involving all stakeholders, including patient to understand how incorrect deliveries impact costs and sustainability for the NHS and where the key areas of focus should be initially to start the process.

- **Collaboration:** Creating a collaborative approach with patient, suppliers, and healthcare teams into the problem and at every discussion in order to really make home nutrition support more efficient and environmentally friendly.

## Overall message

The 2025 update survey shows:

- Sustainability problems in HNS are still widespread
- Volume of waste is significant on a physical and resource level, often caused by system failures
- Delivery reliability has not improved
- Communication remains a major issue
- Patients want to recycle but need clear guidance
- Many problems could be fixed through better coordination

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***Sustainability in HNS is not just about the environment – it affects patient safety, wellbeing and fairness.***

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## Acknowledgement

Thanks go to all the respondents who shared their experiences. Without you this report would not have been possible.

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## Key Highlights

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