



Cheshire and Merseyside

# 10-Point Green Plan for Primary Care

2025-2028



# 10-Point Green Plan for Primary Care 2025

In October 2020, the NHS published [Delivering a 'Net Zero' National Health Service](#), which set ambitions on reaching net zero for emissions controlled directly by the NHS by 2040, and for emissions influenced by the NHS by 2045.

This 10-point plan has been developed by NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board and primary care colleagues to help guide primary care to reduce their environmental impact in line with the NHS' net zero ambitions. Actions can be delivered in any order, so please customise to best suit your setting.



Whilst the idea of reducing your environmental impact may seem daunting, every positive change you make, however small, will bring benefits to you, your practice, your patients, and our planet, both now and for generations to come.



1  
Declare a climate and nature crisis



2  
Monitor and reduce energy use



3  
Calculate your carbon footprint



4  
Embed the '3 R's' into your culture



5  
Switch your business banking to a green bank



6  
Environmental prescribing and treatment



7  
Procure 'green' goods and services



8  
Promote active travel for staff and patients



9  
Engage, educate and empower patients to take individual action on the climate crisis for the benefit of their health



10  
Make use of the Green Impact toolkits



## 1. Declare a nature and climate crisis

This demonstrates to staff and patients that you take their health and future seriously.

- a. Create a statement to put on your website, feature in your newsletter, and share on social media.
  - i. [Climate Emergency declaration guide available from See Sustainability](#)
  - ii. [Sample wording for the declaration available from See Sustainability](#)
- b. Keep the climate crisis as a standing agenda item which features on every practice meeting.
- c. Embed sustainability in your practice culture – view all existing and new projects/changes through the lens of environmental impact and choose environmentally friendly options wherever possible.



## 2. Monitor and reduce energy use

This saves money as well as reducing environmental impact.

- a. Promote energy saving guides and pointers for staff and patients on saving energy both in practice and at home, such as the [Energy Saving Trust](#) or [Get Energy Savvy](#).
- b. Review your practice's EPC/DEC for recommendations to improve energy efficiency, including projected payback periods.
- c. Take steps to improve insulation such as using radiator backing and refreshing ceiling lagging.
- d. Consider switching to a 100% renewable electricity provider.
- e. Undertake an energy audit to find hotspots for energy use, for example:
  - i. Change lightbulbs to LEDs
  - ii. Turn off monitors and other equipment when not in use to reduce electricity consumption.
  - iii. Install PIR (aka magic eye or dawn and dusk sensors) for corridors and outdoor lights.
  - iv. Install heating timers.
  - v. Switch to one central printer instead of multiple smaller printers.
  - vi. When electricity use has been reduced as much as possible, consider installing solar panels or sources of renewable energy. This can be considered as part of estates contract renewals with building landlord/s.



### 3. Calculate the carbon footprint of your practice

By doing this, you can identify emissions hotspots for reduction.

- a. Free carbon calculator tools are available online:
  - i. General practice - [See Sustainability](#) (note this does not include calculations for procedures).
  - ii. Dentistry – (calculations for procedures)  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/724777/Carbon\\_modelling\\_within\\_dentistry.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/724777/Carbon_modelling_within_dentistry.pdf)
- b. Create a plan to target each identified hotspot, e.g.:
  - i. Use yellow and black striped waste bags (aka tiger bags) for non-infectious clinical waste to reduce unnecessary waste. [NHS Property Services](#) have several resources to support correct disposal of waste.
  - ii. Reduce electricity costs from boiling kettles by installing a boiling water tap and turning it off outside working hours.
  - iii. Save water by labelling the appropriate flush on dual-flush toilets. [Hippo Bags](#) can be installed to save water in single flush toilets.
  - iv. Have a system for reporting facilities problems, i.e. leaky taps - use screensavers as reminders.
  - v. The [SHAPE](#) tool can be used to assist with data gathering on the patient population.



### 4. Embed the '3Rs' into your culture

- a. *Reduce* – consider alternative options rather than buying new.
- b. *Reuse* – consider how existing or second-hand items can be utilised. i.e., use an old projector stand as a standing desk.
- c. *Recycle* – sort your recycling in-house or sign up to a company who can sort off-site.
  - i. Waste contracts are often a good option as it is much cheaper to send items for recycling than for destruction with heat recovery.
  - ii. Use printer toner schemes such as:
    - <https://www.brother.co.uk/recycling>
    - <http://www.zerowasterecycling.co.uk/faq.aspx>
    - <https://cartridges4charity.co.uk/toner-cartridge-recycling/>
    - <https://everycartridge.com/uk/alternatives/>



## 5. Switch your business banking provider to a green bank

Greening your money is the single most effective thing you can do to reduce your personal or business impact on the climate crisis.

- a. Many banks directly invest in the fossil fuel industry and may have other unethical practices. Find out more about green and ethical banking:
  - i. <https://www.moneyexpert.com/current-account/ethical-banking/>
  - ii. <https://moralfibres.co.uk/best-ethical-banks/>
- b. This can also apply to private pensions such as NEST – to find out more visit: <https://makemymoneymatter.co.uk/>
  - i. *NB: NHS Pensions is a defined benefit fund and is not invested.*
- c. To learn more about the environmental impact of invested funds, watch this COP26 [talk & short film](#).
- d. Consider contacting your business banking provider to find out where they stand, and to ask them to do better if you are unsatisfied with their response.



## 6. Environmental Prescribing and Treatment

Approximately 48% of primary care's carbon footprint comes from prescribing pharmaceuticals.

- a. Metered dose inhalers (MDIs) make up a significant proportion of primary care greenhouse gas emissions, so optimising asthma care and inhaler use, in addition to switching inhalers to lower emission equivalents, is a national priority.
  - i. Increase preventer inhaler use. Preventer inhalers are often low-emission dry powder inhalers (DPIs), and improve overall asthma care.
  - ii. Reduce high usage of reliever inhalers (6+ prescriptions annually). In addition to the health risks associated with reliever over-use, reliever inhalers tend to be high emission MDIs.
  - iii. Reduce the percentage of non-Salbutamol inhalers prescribed as MDIs.
  - iv. Optimise prescribing to prioritise lower emission Salbutamol inhalers. i.e. prescribe specific lower emission MDIs such as Salamol.
  - v. Review a subset of patients with prescriptions for high carbon inhalers (i.e. Flutiform MDI, Symbicort MDI, Ventolin Evohaler MDI).
  - vi. Consider environmental impact at each respiratory review.
  - vii. Encourage patients to return old/ unwanted inhalers to pharmacies for environmentally safe disposal.

- viii. Encourage use of appropriate inhaler technique e.g. using placebo devices and promoting the Rightbreathe app and [website](#).
- b. Consider non-pharmaceutical medical interventions such as [green social prescribing](#) or an increase in [physical activity](#), bearing accessibility in mind.
  - i. Resources and information is available from the [All Together Active Strategy](#), [Rambler Wellbeing Walks](#), [Natural Health Service](#), and [Mersey Forest](#).
- c. Engage with the IIF polypharmacy reviews, including signposting and collaborative working with community pharmacy.
  - i. [PrescQIPP IMPACT – Improving Medicines and Polypharmacy Appropriateness Clinical Tool](#)
  - ii. [Polypharmacy Guidance on Realistic Prescribing](#)
- d. Engage with the greener ICS prescribing incentive schemes.
- e. Focus on preventative care wherever possible such as treating pre-diabetes through lifestyle changes to prevent diabetes.
- f. Sign up for bulletins on your practice prescribing trends at <https://openprescribing.net/>.
- g. Share [Healthcare Without Harm Europe's Safer Pharma](#) video with prescribers and patients.
- h. Engage in a low waste prescribing approach:
  - i. Avoid overprescribing by reading '[Good for you, good for us, good for everybody](#)' from the Department of Health & Social Care.
  - ii. Deprescribe where appropriate, following Royal Pharmaceutical Society medicines optimisation guidance.
    - 1. [Wirral STOPP START Tool to support medication reviews](#)
    - 2. [Deprescribing in frailty guidance](#)
  - iii. Stop unnecessary third party ordering.
  - iv. Encourage patient-led ordering using the NHS App.
  - v. Raise awareness of, and encourage, recycling options such as:
    - 1. Medicine blister packet recycling
    - 2. Returning inhalers to pharmacies for safe disposal
  - vi. Avoid unnecessary waste for care home residents and people living independently.
  - vii. Ensure prescription durations are appropriate for the course of medication required
  - viii. Check for medicine stockpiling where suitable as part of home visits, see [Dr Deb Gompertz's talk](#) for more information
- i. Continue remote consultations where appropriate.
- j. Encourage care homes to use iPads and RESTORE2 for remote consultations.



## 7. Procure 'green' goods and services

- a. Swap to environmentally friendly stationery. Practices can choose to sign up to the [NHS Supply Chain](#) to access their frameworks.
- b. If you use catering consumables – check out the [NHS' single-use plastics alternatives brochure](#).
- c. Ensuring all cleaning and maintenance products are environmentally friendly (not full of harsh chemicals) helps to reduce toxins and lessens environmental damage.
  - i. [e Delphis](#)
  - ii. <https://methodproducts.co.uk/>
- d. Consolidate orders to reduce deliveries.
- e. Reduce waste by asking suppliers to eliminate unnecessary packaging.
- f. Consider the life cycle of products.
- g. Buy local to reduce travel miles.



## 8. Promote active travel for staff and patients

Active transport, or active travel, is any type of transport involving physical activity, e.g. walking, wheeling or cycling.

- a. Sign up to a [bicycle lease scheme](#) for staff and install bike lockers/secure shelters and changing facilities if required.
  - i. [Cycle to Work Scheme – guidance for employers](#)
  - ii. To encourage patients to cycle, consider installing Sheffield cycle stands (metal 'n' shape stands typically seen outdoors) to allow easy access for short term use.
- b. Encourage staff to walk or cycle to work where possible.
- c. Be aware of local council information on transport schemes for residents.
  - i. [Cheshire East](#)
  - ii. [Cheshire West and Chester](#)
  - iii. [Liverpool City Region](#)
  - iv. [Warrington](#)
- d. Encourage patients to attend appointments using active travel as opposed to driving; explain the cardiovascular and respiratory benefits of this, and encourage the adoption of active travel into daily life.
- e. Consider installing electric vehicle charging points for cars and bikes at the practice. Some funding is available via the government [Workplace Charging Scheme](#)
- f. Get involved with the CHAMPS [All Together Active](#) strategy
- g. Get involved with Active Cheshire & Merseyside Sports Partnership (MSP) and use their resources for patients and staff.
- h. Review how well-mapped your practice is on Google Maps – is the pin in the correct location, and are all cycle paths and pedestrian routes shown? If not, request for them to be added.



## 9. Engage, educate and empower patients to take individual action on the climate crisis for the benefit of their health

By increasing awareness and empowering patients, smaller actions can have a bigger impact. Keen patients may also be able to support implementing green actions at the practice, and spread messages wider.

- a. Discuss the climate crisis with your patient participation group (if applicable) and get them involved in practice actions as identified through discussion and carbon footprinting.
- b. Encourage balanced plant-based diets and activity for maintaining a healthy weight and reducing car use, and improved physical and mental health.
  - i. Free resources available from [Plant Based Health Professionals UK](#).
  - ii. Free local [Educ-EAT](#) training sessions
- i. Engage with and promote green community schemes such as community gardens, tree planting, gardening, and caring for wildflower areas. Contact your local borough council for more information and support – ICB colleagues will have best contact details.
- c. Include environmental rationale when prescribing treatment such as increased exercise, linking with active travel.
- d. Promote self-care practices and education using [ICB resources](#), to help improve overall personal and planetary health through healthy living.



## 10. Use the Green Impact toolkits

The toolkits for general practice and dentistry are hosted on the NUS/SOS Green Impact web platform and contain many useful large and small ideas to follow - you may be surprised by how many things you are already doing! An example of a quick change from the toolkit is switching your default search engine (i.e. Google) to [Ecosia](#), which uses ad profits to plant trees.

The toolkits can be completed by volunteers; either formal volunteers, PPG members, or willing friends or family (know any bored students during school/university holidays?).

- a. Dentistry: <https://www.greenimpact.org.uk/dentists>
- b. General practice: <https://toolkit.sosuk.org/greenimpact/giforhealth/login>

Currently there are no 'Green Impact' toolkits for optometry and pharmacy, but specific links to useful information have been included in Appendix A.

# APPENDIX A – FURTHER INFORMATION



## Dentistry

1. Public Health England. (2018). Carbon modelling within dentistry: towards a sustainable future. GOV.UK. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/carbon-modelling-within-dentistry-towards-a-sustainable-future>
2. Sustainable Dentistry: How-to Guide for Dental Practices. (2022, August 18). Centre for Sustainable Healthcare. <https://sustainablehealthcare.org.uk/dental-guide>
3. Duane, B. Sustainability in dentistry gathers momentum. Br Dent J 233, 241 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41415-022-4921-3>
4. Mackenzie, L. (2022, May 11). Green dentistry: a practical guide - Dentistry. Dentistry.co.uk. <https://dentistry.co.uk/2022/05/13/green-dentistry-a-practical-guide/>
5. Bds, G. W. (2022). A dentist's guide to eco-dentistry – Dr Gemma Wheeler. Electric Teeth. <https://www.electriceeth.com/uk/eco-dentistry/>
6. CSH Environmental Sustainability in Dentistry e-learning - [HEE elfh Hub \(e-elfh.org.uk\)](https://www.hee.nhs.uk/elfh-hub)



## General Practice

1. Cheshire and Merseyside Greener Practice group - [candmgreenerpractice@gmail.com](mailto:candmgreenerpractice@gmail.com)
2. [7 short videos](#) to share on waiting room screens – also available on [YouTube](#).
3. Sign up to the [RCGP Active Practice Charter](#) – assistance may be available from Active Cheshire & MSP for eligible practices.
4. British Medical Association. (2020). *Sustainable and environmentally friendly general practice report*. <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/gp-practices/gp-premises/sustainable-and-environmentally-friendly-general-practice-report>
5. Greener Practice online [High Quality and Low Carbon Asthma Care Toolkit](#)



## Optometry

1. *Bringing sustainability into practice*. (2022). Optometry Today, 62(4), p. 41–42. <https://web.s.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=70ae37db-5be6-4a52-9243-b118b5bbb237%40redis>
2. Centre for Sustainable Healthcare. (2022). *The Annual Carbon Footprint of NHS Sight Tests at Five Optometry Practices*. CSH. [https://networks.sustainablehealthcare.org.uk/sites/TheAnnualCarbonFootprintFiveOptometryPractices\\_1.pdf](https://networks.sustainablehealthcare.org.uk/sites/TheAnnualCarbonFootprintFiveOptometryPractices_1.pdf)
3. Powell, S. (2022, October 7). *The sustainable optometry practice*. Association of Optometrists. <https://www.aop.org.uk/ot/in-practice/business-management/2022/10/07/the-sustainable-optometry-practice>
4. Stankeys. (2019, December 3). *Reducing the Environmental Footprint of Optometry Practice*. OPTOMETRY EVOLUTION. <https://www.optometry-evolution.com/general-optometry-practice/reducing-the-environmental-footprint-of-optometry-practice/>



## Pharmacy

1. Royal Pharmaceutical Society *Climate Change Charter* | RPS. (n.d.). <https://www.rpharms.com/recognition/all-our-campaigns/policy-a-z/sustainability-policy/climate-change-charter>
2. RPS Sustainability Policies. (n.d.). <https://www.rpharms.com/recognition/all-our-campaigns/policy-a-z/sustainability-policy/policies>

3. *Climate change: What can community pharmacy do to become greener?* (2023, January 10). C+D.  
<https://www.chemistanddruggist.co.uk/CD136674/Climate-change-What-can-community-pharmacy-do-to-become-greener>
4. PGEU. (2019, November). *Best Practice Paper on Green and Sustainable Pharmacy in Europe*. PGEU European Community Pharmacists.  
<https://www.pgeu.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/PGEU-Best-Practice-Paper-on-Green-and-Sustainable-Pharmacy-in-Europe.pdf>