

# Our Green Plan 2025-28



**HEALTHIER PLANET**  
**HEALTHIER PEOPLE**



# Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
The foundations of our Green Plan	4
Sustainability at a national level	4
Sustainability in the NHS	5
Sustainability within mental health care provision	5
Sustainability at a local and regional level	6
The governance structure of our sustainability programme	7
Tracking and reporting progress: metrics and targets	8
Areas of focus	9
Our key achievements 2022-2025	10
Our carbon footprint	13
Developing our carbon baseline	14
Methodology	14
Scope of the carbon baseline	14
Our overall carbon baseline	14
Our Green Plan commitments	15
Case studies:	
• Cycle to Work Day	5
• Team reward scheme	12
• Promoting awareness across our workforce	15
• Tackling food waste	18



## Foreword

At North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust, our vision has always centred on delivering outstanding care through people. This same ambition guides our commitment to environmental sustainability. As an 'outstanding' provider of mental health, learning disability, substance misuse and primary care services, we understand that the health of our people is deeply linked with the health of our planet.

The publication of our updated Green Plan marks an important milestone in our journey towards a net zero NHS. This document is not just a plan, it is a pledge. A pledge to our patients and service users, our staff, our partners, and the wider community we serve across North Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. It outlines the practical steps we are taking to reduce emissions, adapt our services, and embed sustainability at the heart of everything we do. This includes thinking about the way we power our buildings, to how we travel, procure goods, and deliver care.

Our actions are rooted in national guidance and driven by local innovation. We are aligning with the NHS's net zero targets, the Royal College of Psychiatrists' call for climate action, and the aspirations of our partners in the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care System. Together, we are building a future where environmental responsibility and health equity go hand in hand.

Progress is already underway. We have seen reductions in our carbon footprint, launched innovative sustainability programmes and empowered our workforce with the tools and training to lead the way. But we know that we must go further, and faster. This Green Plan therefore reflects our determination to lead by example. It sets out how we will continue to reduce our environmental impact while delivering safe, effective, and compassionate care.

I would like to thank all our staff, partners, and sustainability champions who have contributed to this important work. Your commitment is helping to shape a greener, healthier, and more resilient future for our local communities.

Liz Mellor (Chief Strategy Officer)  
North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare NHS Trust



# Introduction

As a leading provider of inpatient and community mental health, learning disability, substance misuse and primary care services across North Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, the Trust is committed to the NHS ambition to reduce its carbon footprint. This commitment spans our estates and the services we deliver.

We also recognise the importance of our role with system partners to reduce emissions across the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care System (SSOT ICS), to support the transition to a net zero NHS. This Green Plan has been informed by the Trust's learning to date and its commitment to this agenda. National legislation and NHS requirements also underpin our approach to ensure we minimise the adverse impacts we have on the environment.

## The foundations of our Green Plan

Our work is aligned with the recommendations in the:

- Delivering a Net Zero National Health Service Report
- NHS Operational Planning and Contracting Guidance
- Estates Net Zero Carbon Delivery Plan
- Net Zero Building Standard
- Net Zero Supplier Roadmap
- Net Zero Travel and Transport Strategy

We also acknowledge the net zero pledges made by the Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPsych) and the role we play in this as a mental health and learning disability care provider in the UK.

## Sustainability at a national level

Climate change is considered the greatest environmental threat to global health in the 21st century by many organisations including, but not limited to, the World

Health Organisation (WHO), British Medical Association (BMA), the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal College of Psychiatrists (RCPsych) and the Royal College of Nursing.

In 2019, the UK set a legally binding target to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, aligning with the 2008 Climate Change Act. Since then, multiple frameworks have been produced to guide progress towards this goal. The most recent of these is the 'Environmental Manifesto' which outlines the current government's (2025) aims to position the UK as a 'clean energy superpower'. This commits the country to achieving zero-carbon electricity by 2030, ending new oil and gas licenses, and advancing the green sector. This strategy emphasises reducing carbon emissions, making it a priority for all organisational operations.



## Sustainability in the NHS

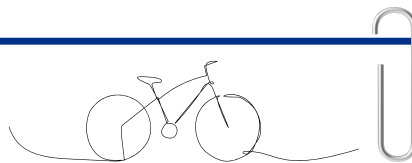
In 2025, NHS England published their 'Green Plan Guidance' to which all updated Trust Green Plans should align. This sets out three overarching aims for Trusts over the upcoming period.

1. To prioritise interventions which support patient care and population health whilst ensuring climate change and sustainability issues are considered.
2. To support planning and investments whilst ensuring increased efficiency of services.
3. To ensure all NHS organisations follow net zero emissions targets.

## Sustainability within mental health care provision

As a mental health and learning disability care provider, we have a particular interest in the RCPsych's declaration of a climate and ecological emergency (2021). The 'Delivering Greener, More Sustainable and Net Zero Mental Health Care' (2023) document provides guidance on how mental health care providers can become greener, more sustainable and net zero with a focus on ensuring mental health services comply with environmental sustainability standards, providing learning and development programs on sustainability, and aligning building, food and waste management systems with national sustainability requirements.

### Case study



-Cycle to Work Day, working in partnership.

#### The challenge

Our staff travel to work survey identified barriers to cycling to work, including:

- lack of cycle storage
- cycling confidence/proficiency
- cost of cycling equipment
- route planning

#### The solution

The Trust used the national Cycle to Work Day as an opportunity to tackle some of the common barriers to cycling, in collaboration with Staffordshire County Council and INTO Newcastle. The event aimed to raise awareness of the many benefits of cycling to work, both in terms of health and wellbeing and environmental sustainability. A range of activities took place on the day to showcase and promote the support available to colleagues.

#### Our impact

A series of events on the day generated a wide-range of benefits.

- The Combined Cycling Club participated in a 40-mile charity bike ride.

- The Trust has enhanced staff access to sustainable travel resources through updates to the travel section of the sustainability page on our internal website. This now includes links to journey planning tools, cycling proficiency support, and Vivup; our employee benefits platform which offers discounted bikes and cycling equipment via payroll deduction.
- A supporting podcast was also produced and shared to raise awareness. These initiatives promote low-emission commuting options, reduce reliance on car travel, and support our wider goals around carbon reduction and staff wellbeing.
- 10 bikes were donated to the Staffordshire County Council waste minimisation programme which refurbishes and donates bikes to people across North Staffordshire.
- A service called 'INTO Newcastle' promoted their offer to staff and patients. Their service is open to anyone who lives in the area local to our main hospital site.



### **Sustainability at a local and regional level**

Our Trust has a long-standing history of working in collaboration with our patients and service users, our partners, and the wider system. As an outstanding organisation, we have a well-established network of anchor organisations and partners to work with towards net zero.

As a Trust, we operate across 30 sites and from a range of community-based premises. Therefore, we are committed to working collaboratively with others and aligning our own goals and ambitions with those of our partners.

We also align efforts with system partners from across the SSOT ICS to achieve net zero by 2045. The SSOT ICS is responsible for the health and care of 1.16 million people who live in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, across a geographical area of 1,048 square miles. We are aligned with two local authorities, Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

### **The SSOT ICS includes:**

- 7 integrated care system portfolios
- 2 local authorities (1 upper tier and 1 unitary)
- 8 district councils
- 26 primary care networks



- 143 GP practices
- 2 acute hospital Trusts
- 2 mental health Trusts
- 1 community health Trust

These organisations, alongside a wide range of voluntary, community, and social enterprise (VCSE) partners, as well as public and private sector stakeholders, collectively support the health and wellbeing of the population across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. The Trust recognises that the Green Plans developed by our partner organisations are critical enablers of system-wide sustainability, fostering alignment and shared action. For example, local authority commitments to expanding sustainable public transport networks can directly benefit our workforce and service users, by improving access to services while reducing carbon emissions through more cost-effective and environmentally responsible travel across the city and county.

## The governance structure of our sustainability programme

Our sustainability programme is led by our Chief Strategy Officer. The Transformation Management Office (TMO) oversee this with support from area of focus leads and sustainability champions.

The following diagram illustrates the current governance structure for sustainability at the Trust.



**Figure 1 – our governance structure for sustainability at Combined.**



Our Greener Working Group meets regularly. This forum provides key updates on deliverables and is a platform to share ideas, celebrate good news stories and discuss emerging opportunities.

The targets set in our Green Plan are based on NHS net zero targets, along with local and regional key performance indicators. Therefore, highlight reporting provides assurance and includes:

- completed actions to support delivery and implementation
- next actions to support delivery and implementation
- escalation issues and actions required
- risks and mitigation actions required

The Greener Working Group reports to the Sustainability Steering Group where progress and assurance is monitored and subsequently communicated into the wider Trust governance system at executive, committee and board level.

### **Tracking and reporting progress: metrics and targets**

Sustainability reporting requirements for NHS organisations are set out by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) group accounting manual, the Trust annual reporting manual and the NHS Standard Contract.

NHS England acknowledge that in the short term, it is difficult to use emissions alone as an indicator of progress towards the NHS' long-term net zero targets, due to lags in data availability, limitations of spend-based calculations and factors over which the NHS has no control (NHSE, 2025).

Progress within each area of focus is reported against identified metrics on the NHS England Greener NHS Dashboard and the Estates Return Information Collection.





# Areas of focus

An overview of the nine key areas of focus.

The NHS Green Plan focuses on achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2040, across nine key areas of focus.

## 1. Workforce and Leadership

Actions which support staff and leaders to learn, innovate and embed sustainability into everyday actions.



## 2. Estates

Actions to reduce emissions and lower costs, while improving energy resilience and patient care.



## 3. Travel and Transport

Actions to decarbonise NHS travel and transport, while also providing cost-saving and health benefits.



## 4. Food and Nutrition

Actions which deliver high-quality, healthy and sustainable food and minimise waste.



## 5. Digital Transformation

Actions which transform care by improving access, quality, productivity and reducing emissions.



## 6. Adaptation

Actions which build resilience and adaptation into business continuity and longer-term planning, to avoid climate-related service disruptions.



## 7. Medicines

Actions which reduce point of use emissions, while improving patient care and reducing waste.



## 8. Net Zero Clinical Transformation (previously Sustainable Models of Care)

Actions which ensure high-quality, preventative, low-carbon care is provided to patients at every stage.



## 9. Supply Chain and Procurement

Actions which embed circular solutions, such as using reusable, remanufactured or recycled solutions when clinically appropriate, which are often cost saving.



## Our key achievements (2022-2025) ★★

### Workforce and leadership

- Launch and roll out of NHSE Net Zero Training.
- Roll out of Carbon Literacy Training.
- Creation of a Sustainability Champion network with representation from across directorates, supporting the delivery of key objectives across teams.
- Delivery and embedding of greener NHS workshops in various forums including Leadership Academy and into our last two cohorts of both Foundations in Leadership and Management and Combined Connects programmes.
- Inclusion of sustainability in recruitment processes and inductions.



### **Estates**

- Installation of LED lighting as standard across premises.
- Heating decarbonisation plans completed across 14 sites.
- Initial roll out of an improved waste and recycling contract.
- Exploration of opportunities for external funding to deliver against decarbonisation plans.

### **Travel and transport**

- Completion of travel survey, with subsequent analysis to inform future plans.
- Feasibility study completed across 11 sites to inform estates planning for EV charging.
- Promotion of active travel through a range of media. For example, the launch of the Cycle to Work scheme.
- New salary sacrifice car scheme launched, promoting only low and zero emission vehicles.

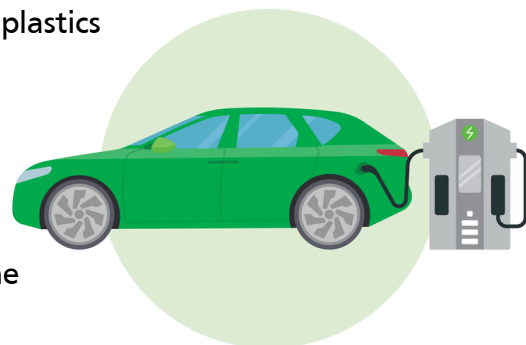


### **Food and nutrition**

- Reduction in food waste across inpatient services.
- Expansion of lower carbon meal choices.
- Promotional and educational events focused on new plant-based menu options.
- Initiatives undertaken to reduce single use plastics and packaging at the on-site hospital café.

### **Digital transformation**

- Introduction and scaled use of text messaging reminder service.
- Improved Wi-Fi networks installed across the Harplands Hospital site.
- Pre-set of all printing to black and white.
- Ongoing effort to convert and archive historic patient paper records to a digital alternative.

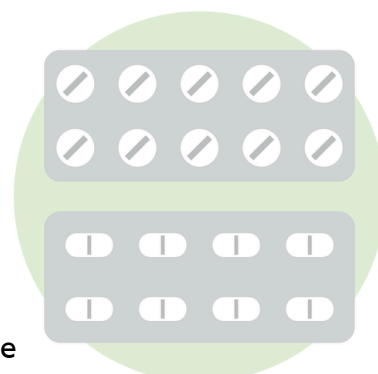


### **Adaptation**

- System delivery plan in progress.
- System working group established.

### **Medicines**

- Initial launch and pilot of Patient Own Drugs (POD) initiative.
- Implementation of Electronic Prescribing and Medicines Administration (EPMA).
- Launch and roll out of QR codes as part of Choice and Medication scheme.



## Supply chain and procurement

- Only recycled paper now purchased and used across the Trust.
- Implementation of 2024 net zero supplier road map requirements, including:
  - all NHS procurements include a minimum of 10% net zero social value and social value weighting in procurement tenders
  - all new contracts over £5m require suppliers to publish a carbon reduction plan

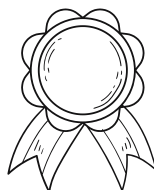
## Net zero clinical transformation (previously sustainable models of care)

- Launch and roll out of Patchs Health across our primary care services.
- Investment in green spaces and gardens across many inpatient areas, in co-production with patients as part of therapeutic activities.



## Case study

-Team reward scheme.



### The challenge

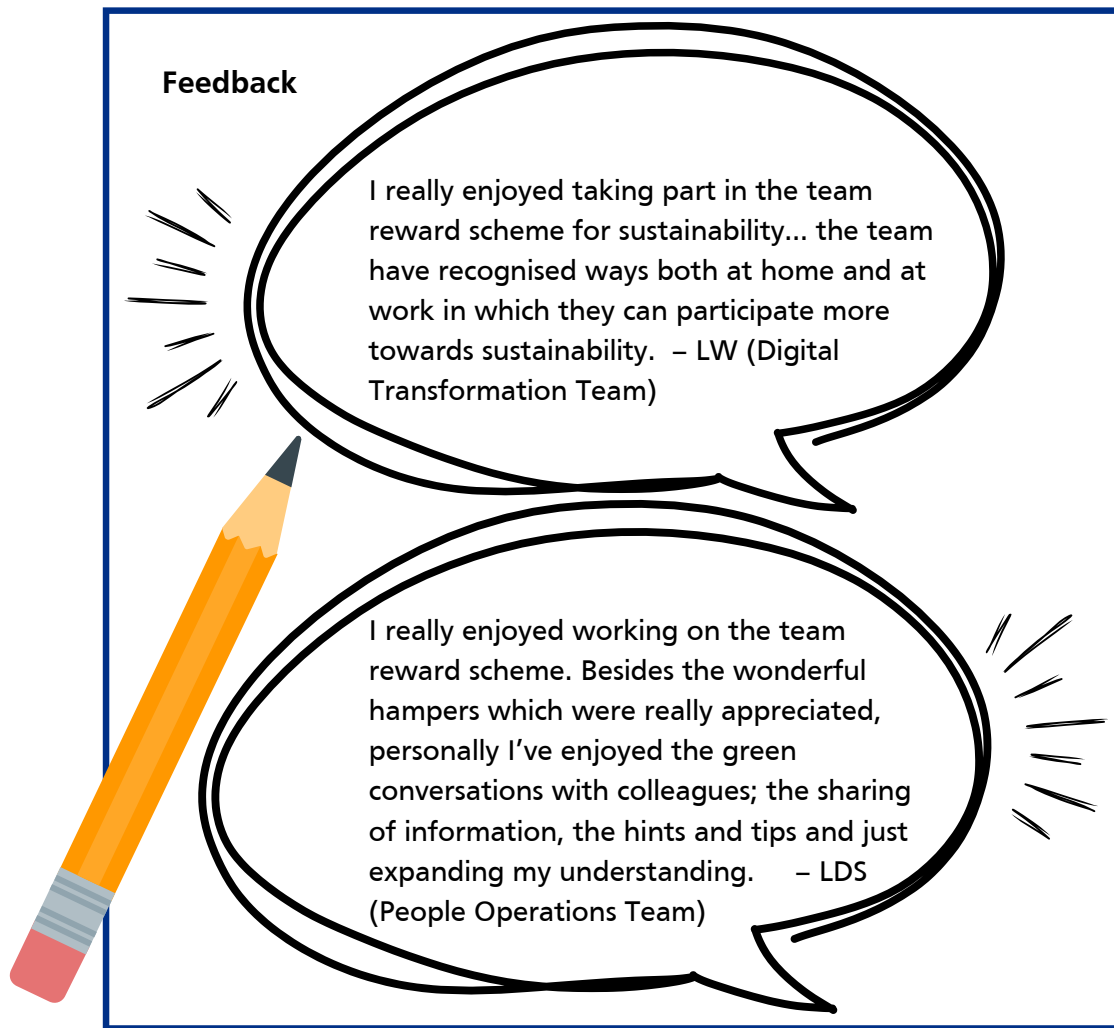
To embed the Green Plan principles across all the directorate teams within the Trust. The aim was to grow and strengthen staff awareness and bring cultural change.

### The solution

All Trust teams were given the opportunity to participate in a team reward scheme designed to promote engagement, achievement, and ownership of sustainability goals. Through this initiative, teams earned recognition and rewards for their ideas, contributions, and delivery of targeted activities or transformation projects. By completing a series of tasks and challenges aligned with specific criteria, teams could achieve bronze, silver or gold level awards. This demonstrated their active support for, and commitment to, sustainability and the Trust's green agenda.

### Our impact

The scheme achieved strong engagement across all Trust directorates, with over 389 staff members from 17 teams actively participating. Each team pledged their commitment to our Green Plan, helping to raise awareness and inspire colleagues across the organisation.



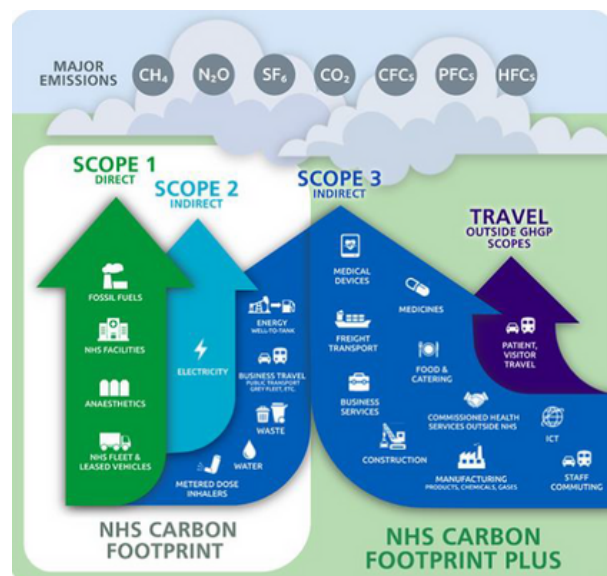
## Our carbon footprint

The NHS Delivering a Net Zero National Health Service Report (2020) considers NHS emissions across three scopes, with the addition of emissions from patient and visitor travel.

The NHS has the overarching targets to achieve a net zero carbon footprint by 2040 and carbon footprint plus by 2045.

We have created a carbon baseline against which we can monitor and compare our annual CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions. This section details the methods used to establish the scope of our baseline and the changes in our emissions we have achieved so far. The Greenhouse Gas Protocol (GHGP) divides greenhouse gas emissions into three scopes.

- Scope 1: direct emissions from owned or directly controlled sources on-site.



**Figure 2 – NHS carbon footprint and carbon footprint plus.**



- Scope 2: indirect emissions from the generation of purchased energy, mostly electricity.
- Scope 3: all other indirect emissions that occur in producing and transporting goods and services, including the full supply chain.

### **Developing our carbon baseline**

The Trust's carbon baseline is measured by reporting the annual carbon dioxide equivalent (CO<sub>2</sub>e) emissions. In the previous Green Plan (2020-21) data was used as our baseline, giving a carbon footprint of 1,683 tCO<sub>2</sub>e. However, the quality of our data and collection methods has since improved, meaning our updated baseline contains a far greater level of detail and accuracy of our total emissions. We have therefore re-established our baseline as 2022, and this is the year against which all annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are compared.

### **Methodology**

To calculate our carbon emissions, we have multiplied our annual consumption data (e.g. kWh for gas consumption) by carbon conversion factors. Carbon conversion factors are produced annually by the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) and Office for National Statistics (ONS) greenhouse gas emissions intensity by industry. This gives us the annual CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions for each aspect monitored.

### **Scope of the carbon baseline**

The following key aspects of operations within the Trust, which produce carbon emissions are included in our carbon baseline:

scope 1: consists of natural gas and fleet vehicle use emissions

scope 2: consists of electricity

scope 3: consists of water, business travel and waste

scope 3+: consists of ICT for homeworking, virtual consultations and video call

### **Our overall carbon baseline**

In 2022, our baseline year, we produced 1,308 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e (tCO<sub>2</sub>e). Energy consumption at the Trust was the largest contributor to emissions in the baseline year, contributing to 80% of CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions. Emissions from business travel had the next greatest impact on our baseline, making up 11% of total CO<sub>2</sub>e emissions.

Since 2022 we have successfully collected and analysed emissions data for 2023 and 2024, comparing these figures against our 2022 baseline. While the Trust's total emissions initially increased, our focused efforts to reverse this trend proved effective. By 2024, we achieved a total reduction compared to the previous year.

The delivery of this Green Plan and the associated action plan is essential to ensure we continue the downward trajectory with the aim of meeting our interim target of an 80% reduction by 2032.



## Case study

-Promoting awareness across our workforce



### **The challenge**

To further promote and diversify engagement and learning opportunities about the greener NHS programme and our Green Plan through alternative routes other than the e-learning package available on the LMS.

### **The solution**

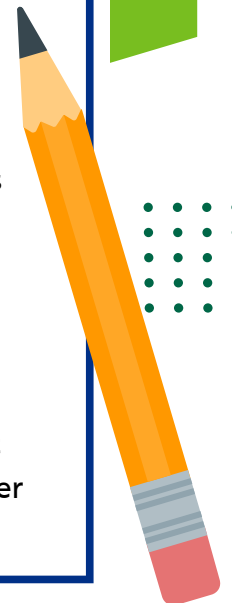
In co-production with sustainability champions, a presentation was co-designed and presented to different teams across directorates, which included global climate change matters, and outlined the NHS net zero aspirations and our commitments as a Trust. This enabled wider reach and improved accessibility through attendance at different events and forums to promote knowledge, education and practical steps to more of the workforce.

### **Our impact**

Since 2024, the presentations have been delivered in over 20 team meetings and additionally reached 160 individuals via attendance at:

- team away days
- the Combined Leadership Academy
- the last two cohorts of both the Foundations in Leadership and Management and Combined Connects Leadership Programmes

Feedback has been maintained at a 4.53/5 overall rating and the main topic rated as 'good' or 'excellent' for the workshop. We have intentions of further refinements to the content events that we run for future delivery.



## **Our green plan commitments**

### **Area of focus: workforce and leadership**

Action: in recognising that our transition to a net zero NHS is driven by our people, we will continue to promote workforce engagement and active participation in our Green Plan. We will explore ways to further develop the Sustainability Champion role through targeted engagement.

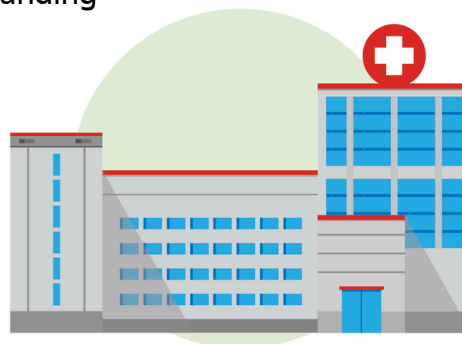
Measure: we will continue to increase compliance of NHSE net zero training. We will provide ongoing assurance reporting to executives, committees and Trust Board. We will focus on raising the agenda, for example, an annual presentation in Leadership Academy and the regular and ongoing collation of case studies for communications. The Trust will endeavour to include sustainability in our standard recruitment process.



### **Area of focus: estates**

Action: we will focus on reducing the carbon emissions arising from the organisation's buildings and infrastructure, and consider green plan deliverables in all refurbishment or building works undertaken.

Measure: we will run a co-ordinated 'switch-off' lighting and power campaign in 2025/26. We will pursue future decarbonisation funding opportunities, and further roll out a new waste and recycling contract to deliver the requirements of the current national mandate (in partnership with facilities). We will maintain a 0% position on oil heating systems across all Trust owned premises and consider and implement innovative design solutions across Trust estates that will contribute to Green Plan deliverables.



### **Area of focus: travel and transport**

Action: we will work towards supporting our workforce and our service users to use more sustainable forms of transport and promote and support active travel.

Measure: to continue to work towards reducing emissions from fleet vehicles and travel across scopes 1 and 3, through new initiatives and promoting the use of public transport where feasible.

Explore opportunities to switch Trust fleet to low and zero emission vehicles in line with national timescales \*subject to capital funding.

We will encourage completion of the bi-annual travel and transport survey, with results analysis informing future planning and decision-making.

We will continue to collaborate and engage with system partners to effect change for local residents and Trust service users.



### **Area of focus: food and nutrition**

Action: we will continue to work towards reducing our food waste through set reduction targets and offer healthy, seasonal, high quality meal choices including low carbon/plant-based meal options.

Measure: we will maintain a reduction in food waste at our Harplands Hospital site throughout 2025 and beyond, and introduce carbon footprint data on menus.

We will launch and evaluate a digital meal ordering service for service users staying in our inpatient settings, and explore the validity of food wastage disposal via an anaerobic digestion system.



### **Area of focus: digital transformation**

Action: we recognise that strong digital foundations are essential for transforming care by improving access, quality, productivity and reducing emissions. We will support colleagues, service users, and local communities to fully realise the benefits of digital transformation, enhancing patient care while contributing to emissions reduction and environmental sustainability.

Measure: we will continue to recycle all old IT equipment, and work to align our local patient electronic portal to the NHS App. We will continue conversion and archiving of historic patient paper records to a digital alternative, and focus on printing reduction and the recycling of printer cartridges used across the Trust.



### **Area of focus: adaptation**

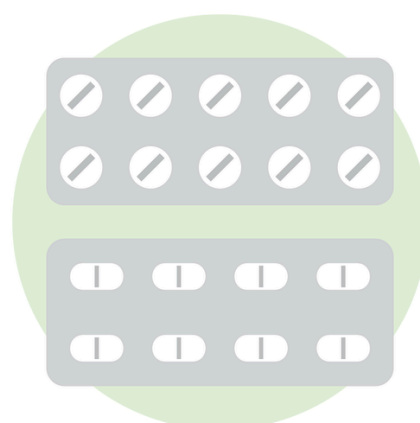
Action: we will work to ensure that resilience and adaptation is built into business continuity and longer-term planning to avoid climate-related service disruptions. We will ensure partnership working between sustainability leads, public health, emergency response teams and estates leads in order to do this effectively.

Measure: we will factor in the effects of climate change when making infrastructure decisions and designing new facilities. We will continue to ensure the cascade of weather health alerts and relevant messaging across the Trust, in line with the government's Adverse Weather and Health Plan. We will continue our engagement and contribution with partners from across the SSOT ICS.



### **Area of focus: medicines**

Action: we recognise that medicines account for around 25% of NHS emissions and are committed to playing our part with partner providers in reducing emissions from medicines. Measure: we will reduce medication waste with wards, through expanding the scope of Patients Own Drugs (POD) initiative. We will explore the use of technology to optimise prescribing practices across the Trust, reducing waste and offering patient choice.



### **Area of focus: net zero clinical transformation**

Action: we are committed to moving to out-of-hospital and digitally enabled care, where clinically appropriate, improving prevention of ill health and reducing health inequalities.

Net zero clinical transformation will work towards ensuring high-quality, preventative, low-carbon care for our service users at every stage.

Measure: quality improvement projects will routinely consider sustainability factors.

We will focus on a measurable reduction in emissions, with co-benefits for outcomes, quality of care, efficiency and reducing healthcare inequalities.



### **Area of focus: supply chain and procurement**

Action: we will continue to work with NHS Supply Chain to reduce and remove waste, sourcing alternative sustainable products where possible.

Measure: we will maintain provision of recycled paper across the Trust, business case templates will also include the requirement to complete a sustainability impact assessment.

#### **Case study**

-Tackling food waste.



#### **The challenge**

The National Standards for Healthcare Food and Drink state that 'organisations must assess their level of food waste, and set food waste reduction targets and minimisation plans using the WRAP approach - target, measure, act'. The aim being to reduce overall food waste and CO2e, reduce costs and improve the nutrition received by patients.

Since 2023/24, NHS providers have been asked to report food waste data via the Estates Return Information Collection (ERIC) platform across weighed food waste, broken down into:

- preparation waste
- plate waste
- unserved meals
- spoilage

Over the past financial year, our internal facilities team have worked in close partnership with our catering department and the clinical teams to reduce food waste across the Harplands Hospital Site.



### The solution

Through strong partnership working, careful monitoring of patient meal orders, and education on recommended portion sizes, teams have successfully maintained menu variety without compromising service quality. This achievement reflects a fantastic collaborative effort between colleagues in facilities, Serco, and our clinical teams.

### Our impact

Colleagues at Harplands Hospital have achieved a significant reduction in monthly food waste — from over 2,000 kg during the first and second quartiles of the 2024–2025 financial year to just over 700 kg. This represents a monthly reduction of more than 1,600 kg, or over 70%.

### Feedback

Serco, our soft services provider, have clearly demonstrated their commitment and partnership working with the Trust to implement this initiative. They remain focused on managing and monitoring food waste daily in partnership with the Trust Facilities team. - Staff member (Facilities Team)

