

Climate change – what's next on the agenda?

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One thing that 2020 taught us is that collaboration is key. Everything is connected. We saw how quickly Covid-19 gripped the world and how solutions to fighting the pandemic have become global. Whilst Covid has to date been a year-long phenomenon, the issue of climate change remains and the situation becomes more desperate every day. It's an ongoing crisis that needs serious action.

A lot of positive action has already been taken but it's not enough given the scale of the issue. The World Health Organisation is reported to have said, shortly before the Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015 by 196 nations, that climate change is "the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century." In June 2019, the UK government committed to reduce carbon emissions to zero by 2050. Many other countries have also pledged this.

The NHS Green Challenge

The NHS has set itself a greater challenge! In October 2020, whilst bravely battling all that Covid could throw at it, "A Greener NHS" was published. It is the first national health system in the world to aim for net zero carbon by 2040. The report set out a roadmap with targets which seemed credible and milestones which encouraged us to take action.

The plan is to cut direct emissions to net zero carbon by 2040. Recognising the vast supply network which supports the NHS, the aim is to cut suppliers' emissions by 2045.

Targets for 2021

Every year counts in achieving these goals. So what can we expect during the rest of this year? Here are the key things to look out for.

- The world's first zero emissions ambulance is to be road tested. The aim is to replace the existing emergency vehicle fleet with zero emission vehicles by 2032.
- A new net zero carbon hospital standard is expected to be issued. This will be supported by the Government's funding to provide 40 new hospitals. Renewable energy sources and standardisation of designs will no doubt feature.
- Every NHS organisation must have a Board-level lead responsible for achieving net zero carbon in line with the NHS's green agenda. This will affect all operational aspects.
- A framework is expected to evaluate carbon reduction with new care models. This is really interesting because we have seen during COVID how new ways of delivering care are being provided successfully, including remote consultations.
- The digital transformation agenda, using virtual reality tools, wearable medical devices, telehealth and smart technology, is to be aligned with the green plan.
- A pilot NHS supplier engagement programme where suppliers voluntarily share their plans is to be extended.
- A new national standard for healthcare food for patients, staff and visitors is expected from NHS England and NHS Improvement.
- The third Health and Social Care Sector Climate Change Adaptation Report is understood to be issued in the next few months. The second report was issued in 2015. This new report is awaited with interest in light of the range of actions being taken to get to net

carbon zero in the health sector.

- In November, Glasgow will host the latest United Nations annual climate change conference, the COP26. It's hoped to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement. The pro-active approach of the NHS and some suppliers will be a shining example to applaud.

What can we do?

- If you don't know it already, familiarise yourself with your organisation's Green Plan. It will be relevant no matter what role you have in your organisation.
- There are two main areas to focus on in connection with the NHS's commitments to get to net carbon zero:
 - Direct changes to operational aspects including estates and facilities, travel and transport, supply chains and medicines.
 - Enabling actions including more sustainable care models, workforce, networks, funding and investment mechanisms.
- Continue to embrace change. Technology continues to help us massively during Covid. It's opened our minds to exciting possibilities already.

The future

2021 got off to a rocky start with the announcement of another lockdown early in January. However, there are some really exciting and encouraging green projects underway which we can support.

We would really like to hear about your own experiences and aspirations in relation to the green agenda.

We're looking forward to updating you further during the coming months and if you have any queries in connection with this subject, please contact Ann Cojeen in our Real Estate Health team who will be able to assist you or direct you to colleagues with other specialisms in this area.

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