

# NHS North East London Green Guide for General Practices

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## Who is this guide aimed at?

- This guide is designed mainly for those working in general practice but we hope that it is also useful for the wider primary care team
- [Additional information for a wider range of primary care services is available](#)

We acknowledge that there is huge diversity within our practices so this guide provides multiple options and can be implemented in whichever order makes sense for each practice.

*Health sector facilities churn out CO<sub>2</sub> through the use of significant resources...as medical professionals our commitment is to 'first, do no harm.' Places of healing should be leading the way, not contributing to the burden of disease.*

*Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus,  
Director General, World Health Organisation*

Currently, the NHS accounts for 5% of UK carbon emissions with 23% of NHS carbon emissions generated in primary care. In North East London (NEL), our health is harmed by these emissions through several routes including by breathing in [some of the most toxic air in the UK](#).

This guide shows how we can reduce our carbon footprint, deliver excellent clinical care, improve staff wellbeing and reduce health inequalities by [applying a sustainability lens to all that we do](#). This guide aims to build on the excellent work that practices are already doing e.g. via the [NEL personalised care and social prescribing programme](#) and low carbon inhaler prescribing.

In 2020, NHS England pledged to reduce the NHS carbon footprint to net zero by 2040 in [Delivering a Net Zero Health Service](#). This is integrated into our [North East London NHS Green Plan 2022-25](#) with the **aim to reduce our footprint by 40% by 2025 in all primary care services in north east London**.

### How does greener care impact health?



## Resources available

Achieving net zero by 2040 is a national target with allocated funding and resources. [On average, practices that make just 2 of these recommended changes save about £1000/year](#) (e.g. by reducing energy use and waste). However, there are initial monetary and time costs to making these changes. General resources are listed below with further resources in the relevant sections.

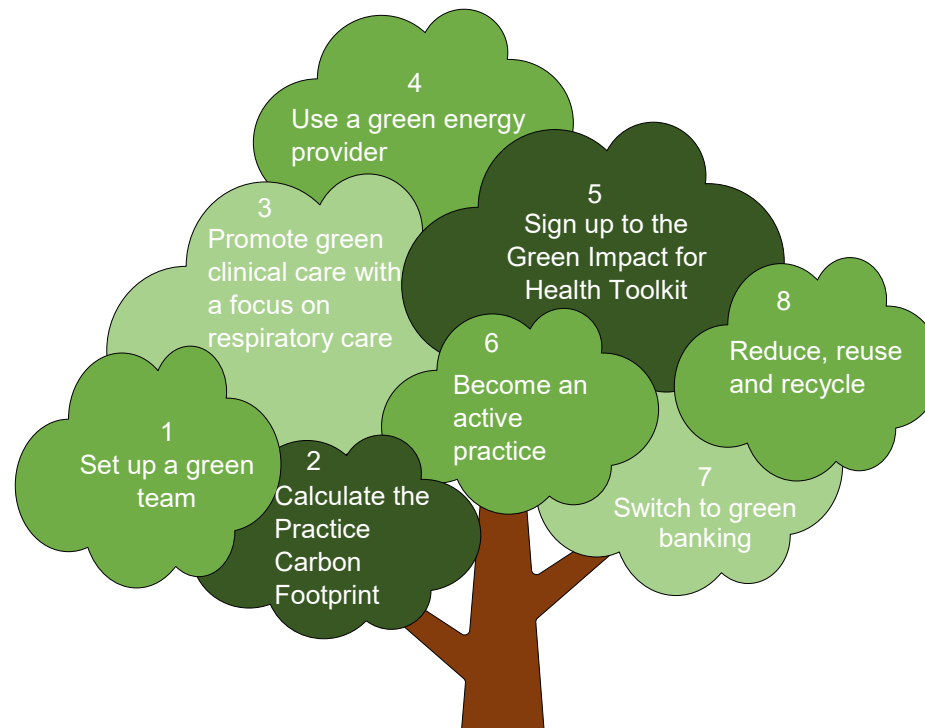


- Resources about environmentally sustainable primary care are available via the [Greener Practice](#), [RCGP Sustainable Development](#) and [E-learning for healthcare](#) websites
- Free carbon literacy for primary care educational resources through [SEE Sustainability](#)
- Informal peer support through [Greener Practice North London](#)
- Find out more about [the relationship between the climate and health inequalities](#)
- List of ICS recommended suppliers and bulk purchasing contracts in development

If you are already involved in a low carbon care project that you would like to share, please contact us via [nelondonicb.nelgreenteam@nhs.net](mailto:nelondonicb.nelgreenteam@nhs.net)

By taking up the freely available training online, this should put you in a good position to apply for upcoming innovation funding which will be advertised when available.

## We have eight steps to take in this guide





## 1. Create a practice green team

To make green changes, it's important to have a whole-team approach with everyone supported to take action. To spearhead this change, we recommend creating a practice green team and choosing a practice lead who can be either clinical or non-clinical (or you could split the role)

Form a green team made up of a mix of staff and patients (e.g. GP, nurse, pharmacist, PPG, receptionist) who work together to create a green practice plan and implement actions
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Agree regular meeting frequency
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Get senior management (e.g. partner/practice manager) to agree to you having time to meet
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As a group, look over this guide and decide on the actions you would like to take and present an action plan to senior management
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Consider <a href="#">declaring a climate emergency</a> to launch your plan
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Keep the climate crisis as a standing agenda item which features in every practice meeting
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Some practices have tapped into a wealth of experience among their patients who have helped with projects such as developing a [practice garden in Newham](#), [a horticulture project in Tower Hamlets](#) and a [another practice garden in Hackney](#).

### Useful campaigns and resources

Climate emergency declaration: A guide for primary care [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HNEvWY9qOkvzWq7HTm9Qi\\_yzSIXtEAyd/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HNEvWY9qOkvzWq7HTm9Qi_yzSIXtEAyd/view)

Practice Garden in Newham <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZVEE-z2Sv-dEbLBW6FIWFn786TCrv2pn/view>

Gardening and horticulture in Tower Hamlets <https://www.bbbc.org.uk/services/gardening-horticulture/>

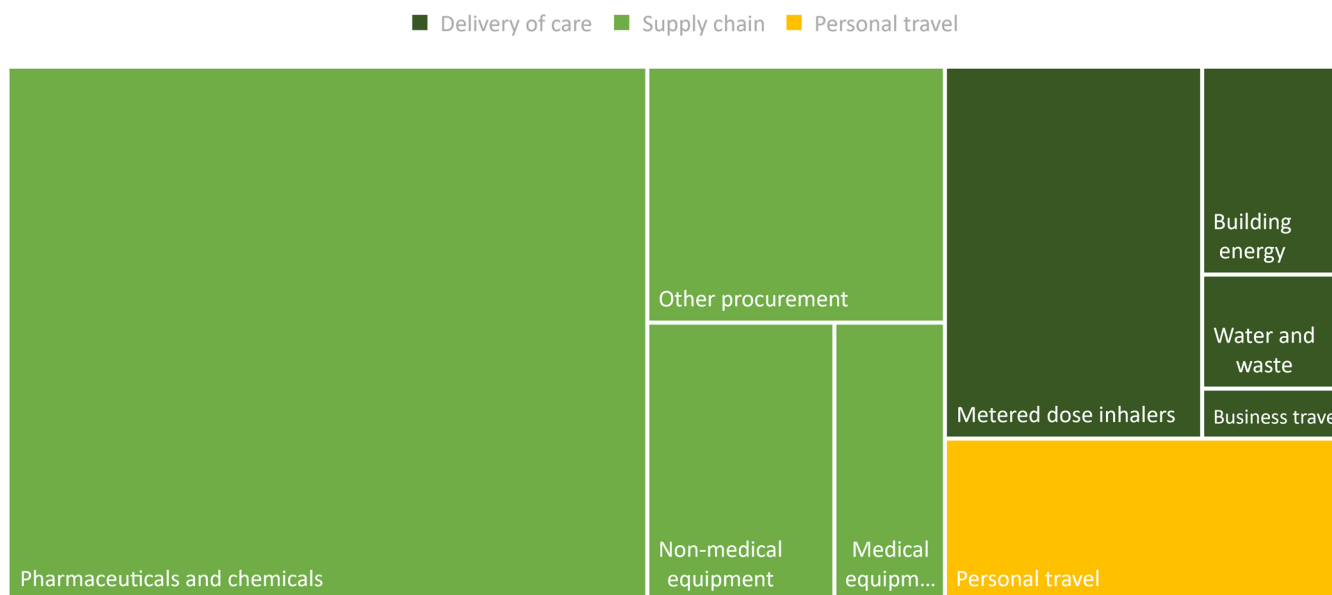
Practice garden in Hackney <https://www.vchackney.org/volunteering-in-gp-practices/>

## 2. Calculate the practice carbon footprint

To prioritise action and measure progress, we need to know the carbon footprint of each practice. An [estimate of the NHS England carbon footprint has been published](#) which includes an estimate for the carbon footprint of primary care (as below). Please note that this is for the wider primary care team and not specific for practices.



Carbon Footprint of NHS primary care in England 2019



You can [carry out a self-assessment of your non-clinical carbon footprint using the free SEE sustainability GP carbon calculator](#). The footprint of each practice will vary dependent on factors such as patient demographics, disease burden and transport links.

**On average, approximately 60% of the carbon footprint is from clinical care and 40% is non-clinical.**

Knowing your carbon footprint allows you to effectively target your actions for reducing non-clinical carbon emissions with more energy efficiency and less energy costs. For further guidance, south east London has developed a [Decarbonising General Practice Guide](#).



## 2. Promote green clinical care

### A focus on respiratory

#### *Metered dose inhalers (MDIs) account for 18% of the estimated NEL carbon footprint*

The 4 principles of sustainable clinical care are 1) prevention, 2) patient empowerment and self-care, 3) less wasteful systems, 4) low carbon alternatives.

As described above, the key focus for reducing primary care emissions will be reviewing clinical care. We recommend focussing on respiratory care as there a pressing clinical need and there are already resources available to support this. In the UK, we have the [second worst asthma mortality rate in Europe](#) and it is thought that [2/3 UK asthma deaths are preventable](#). Improving asthma care will reduce mortality, improve patient outcomes and bring about a rapid fall in emissions.

The sustainable care model illustrated below gives examples of how to provide high quality, low carbon asthma care.

#### Prevention

- Improved air quality e.g. using information for healthcare staff and patients in Global Action Plan's Clean Air Hub
- Smoking cessation

#### Patient empowerment and self care

- Good understanding of asthma action plan
- Social prescribing/peer support e.g. Singing for Lung Health via Royal London Hospital

#### Less wasteful systems

- Deprescribing including avoiding unnecessary repeat orders
- Appropriate inhaler disposal
- Remote care where appropriate to reduce unnecessary travel

#### Low carbon alternatives

- Support patient choice switching from high carbon (e.g. Ventolin) to low carbon (e.g. Salamol) inhaler
- Prescribing appropriate dose per puff to minimise the total number of puffs (and high-carbon propellant) used

There is more information available about the [environmental impact of inhalers](#). Further information about funding for this work via the PCN Investment and Impact Fund 2022/23, off-the-shelf audits for EMIS and SystmOne and patient information material are in [this Greener Practice high quality low carbon asthma toolkit](#).

You can also find how your practice compares to other practices in NEL for the [average carbon footprint of salbutamol inhalers](#) and [other environmental measures of prescribing](#).

### Useful campaigns and resources

Further guidance is available about the [4 principles of sustainable healthcare](#) and [sustainable quality improvement](#).

Singing for Lung Health Group [https://www.bartscharity.org.uk/our\\_news/singing-sessions-to-improve-patients-lung-health/](https://www.bartscharity.org.uk/our_news/singing-sessions-to-improve-patients-lung-health/)

Clean Air Hub: <https://www.cleanairhub.org.uk/>

### **A focus on plant based diets**

Up to 30% of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions globally are linked to agriculture and food production, and the environmental impact of the food we eat is one of the key changes we can make to tackle the issue of climate change. The British Dietetics Association (BDA) believes dietitians should be able to reconcile the nutritional and environmental science to give consistent messages about a healthy, sustainable and varied diet.

#### **Prevention**

- Diets that include more fruit and vegetables help prevent long term conditions
- Eating more fruit helps improves lung health

#### **Patient empowerment and self care**

- Reducing meat and dairy has a co-benefit to people's health and reduces greenhouse gases
- The One Blue Dot project is led by the BDA and the website includes meal plans

#### **Less wasteful systems**

- London produces nearly 2 million tonnes of food waste every year
- Without realising, individual households waste £600 worth of food every year, most of which is edible.

#### **Low carbon alternatives**

- Reducing cream based sauces to tomato increases veg intake and reduces saturated fats
- Halving meat in a recipe and swapping it for pulses increases veg intake and reduces saturated fats

### **Useful campaigns and resources**

[Can healthy food save the planet? - EAT \(eatforum.org\) \(1.5 min video\)](#)

[One Blue Dot - the BDA's Environmentally Sustainable Diet Project](#)

[Eat Like a Londoner: Save money. Eat better. Help the planet.](#)

[Factsheets - Plant Based Health Professionals UK](#)



#### 4. Use a green energy provider

All NHS providers are expected to have already switched to a renewable energy provider. You can [learn about how to switch to a green energy supplier](#) and find [quotes for green energy suppliers](#). It is a good idea to [switch to a smart meter](#) if your provider can supply this so you have more accurate data about your energy use. For NHSPS and CHP tenants, you can find out about the [NHS Property Services green strategy](#) or the [Community Health Partnerships green strategy](#).



#### 5. Sign up to the Green Impact for Health Toolkit

The [Green Impact for Health Toolkit](#) (GIFHT) contains lots of ideas for practice-based climate actions and can be a really good starting point for generating ideas and bring the team together to choose priorities for the practice. You can [watch a short 8 minute video about how a practice in Islington used the toolkit](#) and find the [staff engagement resources used for implementing the GIFHT](#). You can [also find ideas for implementing with GIFHT with medical students](#) and consider integrating the GIFHT into GP Registrar quality improvement projects..



*Primary care has shown time and time again, how adaptive we are to deliver good outcomes. Climate change is an urgent threat and we need to work collaboratively to tackle it for the betterment of the future of our society.*

Dr Amit Sharma,  
GP in Barking and Dagenham and NEL Net Zero Clinical Lead

## 6. Become an active practice

In London, **14% traffic is due to people travelling for NHS business or appointments**, contributing to our carbon footprint and [poor air quality](#). Increasing physical activity and active transport whilst reducing unnecessary car journeys is good for patient and staff health and makes a significant difference to our carbon footprint.



The [RCGP Physical Activity Hub](#) has plenty of ideas about how to do this including being an active charter practice, [parkrun practice](#) and offering the [cycle to work scheme for staff](#). You can also access an [example of a staff survey used at a practice to explore staff travel patterns](#).

You can access [free local authority cycle training](#) and there are plenty of local groups encouraging cycling such as [Bikeworks](#) and [Cycle Sisters](#).

You can measure the amount of referrals being made to active travel, walking groups or exercise clubs via your Social Prescriber.

## 7. Switch to green banking

Reducing the harmful impact of your money, both personally and as a business, is one of the most effective ways to reduce your impact on the planet. You can [check your bank here](#). You can find out more about ethical banks via the [good shopping guide](#) or [money expert](#). With more detailed analysis (for subscribers) via [ethical consumer](#).



### Useful campaigns and resources

Check your bank <https://bank.green/>

Good shopping guide to green banking <https://thegoodshoppingguide.com/subject/ethical-banks-building-societies/>

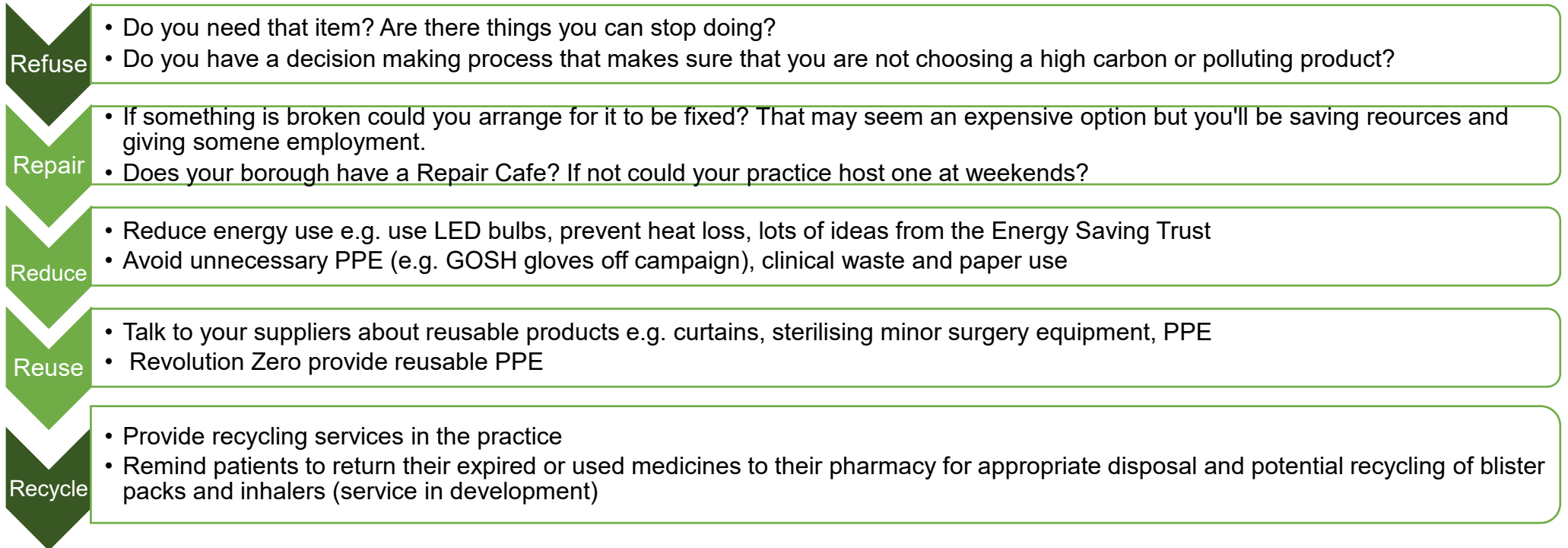
Money expert guide to ethical banking <https://www.moneyexpert.com/current-account/ethical-banking/>

*Thinking environmental sustainability is an easy way of not just improving the health of our patients but also encouraging equity in populations, improving our local environment and availing of cost savings. It's a win, win, win!*

*Dr Sudeshna Sarkar, GP in Waltham Forest*

## 8. Refuse, Repair, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle

These 5 principles, in descending order of priority, can help us minimise waste as seen below.



Practices can sign up to access the NHS Supply Chain and [find out more about NHS sustainable suppliers](#).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This guide was developed by the NHS North East London Net Zero Clinical Leads and we are grateful for input from many primary care colleagues. Particular thanks go to Dr Sharon Christy.

We welcome further feedback and questions so please send comments to [nelondonicb.nelgreenteam@nhs.net](mailto:nelondonicb.nelgreenteam@nhs.net)

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this and we wish you good luck with your creation of a high quality, low carbon service.

## LINKS TO FURTHER RESOURCES FROM EACH SECTION

### Introduction

1. NEL air quality  
<http://coronavirus.wel.nhs.sitekit.net/covid-updates/clean-air-is-healthcare/611390>
2. Government climate and health guide for healthcare professionals  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/climate-change-applying-all-our-health/climate-and-health-applying-all-our-health>
3. NEL Guide for new Social Prescribing Link Workers, 2021  
<https://www.eastlondonhcp.nhs.uk/downloads/ourplans/Social%20Prescribing/NEL%20Guide%20Social%20Prescribing%20Link%20Workers%20June%202021.pdf>
4. Network Contract Directed Enhanced Service, Investment and Impact Fund 2022/23, 2022  
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/B1357-investment-and-impact-fund-2022-23-updated-guidance-march-2022.pdf>
5. NHS England Delivering a Net Zero National Health Service, 2020  
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/a-net-zero-nhs/>
6. North East London NHS Green Plan  
<https://www.eastlondonhcp.nhs.uk/ourplans/green-plan.htm>

### Introduction Continued: Supporting resources

1. E-learning Environmentally Sustainable Healthcare Programme  
<https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/programmes/environmentally-sustainable-healthcare/>
2. Green Impact for Health Toolkit, Greener Practice website  
<https://www.greenerpractice.co.uk/news-item/green-impact-for-healthcare-toolkit-gifh/>
3. Greener Practice  
<https://www.greenerpractice.co.uk/information-and-resources/>

4. RCGP Sustainable Development  
<https://www.rcgp.org.uk/policy/rcgp-policy-areas/climate-change-sustainable-development-and-health.aspx>
5. SEE Sustainability  
<https://seesustainability.co.uk/health-carbon-literacy>
6. Greener Practice North London  
<https://www.greenerpractice.co.uk/join-our-network/local-groups/north-london/>
7. Bede, F. and Radcliffe, E. (2022) The 'inverse climate law': a call for health equity and climate justice – BJGP Life. Available at:  
<https://bjgplife.com/the-inverse-climate-law-a-call-for-health-equity-and-climate-justice/>

### Create a practice green team

1. Climate emergency declaration: A guide for primary care  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HNEvWY9qOkvzWq7HTm9Qi\\_yzSIXtEAyd/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HNEvWY9qOkvzWq7HTm9Qi_yzSIXtEAyd/view)
2. Practice Garden in Newham  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZVEE-z2Sv-dEbLBW6FIWFn786TCrv2pn/view>
3. Gardening and horticulture in Tower Hamlets  
<https://www.bbbc.org.uk/services/gardening-horticulture/>
4. Practice garden in Hackney  
<https://www.vchackney.org/volunteering-in-gp-practices/>

### Calculate the practice carbon footprint

1. Tennison, I. *et al.* (2021) 'Health care's response to climate change: a carbon footprint assessment of the NHS in England', *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 5(2), pp. e84–e92. doi: 10.1016/S2542-5196(20)30271-0. Available at:  
[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(20\)30271-0/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(20)30271-0/fulltext)
2. GP Carbon Calculator  
<https://www.gpcarbon.org/#/>
3. South East London decarbonising general practice guide  
<https://selondonccg.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/SEL-ICS-Decarbonising-primary-care-guide.pdf>

### Promote green care with a focus on respiratory

1. Principles of Sustainable Healthcare  
<https://www.greenerpractice.co.uk/information-and-resources/clinical-considerations/principles-of-sustainable-healthcare/>
2. Sustainable Quality Improvement  
<https://www.susqi.org/>
3. Asthma and Lung UK: Lung conditions kill more people in the UK than anywhere else in Western Europe  
<https://www.asthmaandlung.org.uk/lung-conditions-kill-more-people-in-the-uk-than-anywhere-in-western-europe/>
4. World Asthma Day 2022 NHSE Blog, Dr Veena Aggarwal  
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/blog/world-asthma-day-tackling-climate-change-and-improving-respiratory-care/>
5. Bart's Singing for Lung Health  
[https://www.bartscharity.org.uk/our\\_news/singing-sessions-to-improve-patients-lung-health/](https://www.bartscharity.org.uk/our_news/singing-sessions-to-improve-patients-lung-health/)
6. Clean Air Hub  
<https://www.cleanairhub.org.uk/>
7. Environmental impact of inhalers  
<https://greeninhaler.org/>
8. Greener Practice High Quality and Low Carbon Asthma Care Toolkit  
<https://www.greenerpractice.co.uk/high-quality-and-low-carbon-asthma-care/>
9. Open Prescribing environmental impact of inhalers by NEL practice  
[https://openprescribing.net/ccg/A3A8R/carbon\\_salbutamol/](https://openprescribing.net/ccg/A3A8R/carbon_salbutamol/)
10. Open Prescribing general measures for environmental impact of prescribing in NEL  
<https://openprescribing.net/ccg/A3A8R/measures/?tags=greenernhs>

### Use a green energy provider

1. Energy Saving Trust guide to green energy suppliers  
<https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/advice/switching-your-energy-supplier/>
2. Green Energy Switch  
<https://www.greenenergyswitch.co.uk/switching/>
3. Smart meters for small businesses  
<https://www.smartenergygb.org/about-smart-meters/small-businesses/smart-meters-for-small-businesses>
4. NHS Property Services Green Plan  
<https://www.property.nhs.uk/occupier-hub/delivering-a-greener-nhs/>
5. Community Health Partnerships Green Plan

<https://communityhealthpartnerships.co.uk/estate-of-the-future/green-chp/>

### Sign up for the Green Impact for Health Toolkit (GIFHT)

1. Green Impact for Health Toolkit  
<https://www.greenimpact.org.uk/GIforHealth>
2. Example video (8 mins) of how to implement the GIFHT  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1N8eVB0IsAn62vKJmPFNUmNWrPRI3LLgv/view>
3. Staff resources for implementing GIFHT  
[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cU2im\\_89CgiyP\\_zp-bWRYcYTQKOMQ\\_5t](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cU2im_89CgiyP_zp-bWRYcYTQKOMQ_5t)
4. Implementing GIFHT with medical students  
<https://www.greenerpractice.co.uk/information-and-resources/events-webinars/past-webinars/greener-practice-sy-meeting-win-win-solutions-medical-student-involvement-in-delivering-the-green-impact-toolkit-05-05-22/>

### Become an active charter practice

1. Find out your local air quality levels  
<https://addresspollution.org/>
2. RCGP Physical Activity Hub  
<https://elearning.rcgp.org.uk/course/view.php?id=536>
3. Parkrun practices  
<https://r1.dotdigital-pages.com/p/49LX-52M/parkrunpractice>
4. Cycle to work scheme  
<https://www.cyclescheme.co.uk/employers>
5. Staff travel survey  
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1LPBvlyh4TiJn3tFtXzYS-bA4hN2MXzsvolisve9IYjw/edit>
6. Local authority free cycle training  
<https://www.cycleconfident.com/>
7. Bikeworks cycle groups and workshops  
<https://www.bikeworks.org.uk/cycling-for-wellbeing/>
8. Cycle Sisters  
<https://www.cyclesisters.org.uk/>

### Switch to green banking

1. Check your bank  
<https://bank.green/>
2. Good shopping guide to green banking  
<https://thegoodshoppingguide.com/subject/ethical-banks-building-societies/>
3. Money expert guide to ethical banking  
<https://www.moneyexpert.com/current-account/ethical-banking/>

### Refuse, Repair, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

1. Energy saving Trust guide to energy efficiency in the workplace  
<https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/a-guide-energy-efficiency-in-the-workplace/>
2. Great Ormond Street 'Gloves Off' Campaign  
[https://www.england.nhs.uk/atlas\\_case\\_study/the-gloves-are-off-campaign/](https://www.england.nhs.uk/atlas_case_study/the-gloves-are-off-campaign/)
3. Revolution Zero Reusable PPE  
<https://www.revolution-zero.co.uk/>
4. NHS Supply Chain Sustainability  
<https://www.supplychain.nhs.uk/sustainability/>