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# CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMME ANNUAL REPORT

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# ANNUAL CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY REPORT 2021/22

## 1. Introduction

This is NHS 24's first annual Climate Emergency and Sustainability Report. Numerical values included in the report relate to the year 2021/22 however the narrative that we have provided relates to ongoing work, including some conducted in the current financial year 2022/23.

The planet is facing a triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution because of human activities breaking the planet's environmental limits.

The World Health Organisation recognises that climate change is the single biggest health *threat* facing humanity. Health organisations have a duty to cut their greenhouse gas emissions, the cause of climate change, and influence wider society to take the action needed to both limit climate change and adapt to its impacts. More information on the profound and growing threat of climate change to health can be found here: [www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health). However, it is also recognised that the climate change also presents an *opportunity* to improve health, prompting actions in relation to transport; energy; product consumption and waste that can potentially improve population health and reduce health inequalities.

NHS 24 is a National Board, helping to deliver a healthier Scotland by providing care and connecting people to health and care advice, information and support - 24/7, including through a range of online and telephone information, advice and services. We employ around 1600 people and are based across 6 regional centres.

## 2. Leadership and governance

NHS 24 Leadership have embraced the need to act on this urgent issue. A full-time Programme Manager has been appointed to support the development of the NHS 24 Climate Emergency and Sustainability Programme (CESP) and a CESP Action Plan is being developed, in conjunction with the development of a new Organisational Strategy, due for publication in Spring 2023. Staff engagement on CESP is being included as part of ongoing engagement on the wider organisational strategy, and work to engage and support the energy and enthusiasm of our people and give them the resources and backing they need to make changes will continue beyond the development phase of the CESP Action Plan.

NHS 24's governance in relation to the climate emergency and sustainability is as follows:

- The NHS 24 Sustainability Governance Board (strategic) function is delivered by the Executive Management Team, with Dr Laura Ryan, Medical Director, the named Executive Lead
- The NHS 24 Sustainability Development Group (operational) function has been established as a new group, with membership from across all

directorates within the organisation. This group met for the first time in October 2022 and will continue to meet on a two-monthly basis.

- The NHS 24 non-executive Board member Sustainability Champion, Marieke Dwarshuis, has been appointed to provide external analysis, receiving regular updates from the Executive Lead.
- A standing agenda item on the NHS 24 CESP is included on SMT, EMT and Full Board agendas, with formal decision making on NHS 24 CESP conducted at quarterly NHS 24 Planning and Performance Committee meetings.
- Updates on relevant aspects of NHS 24 CESP may be provided to other Committees, as and when required.

### 3. Greenhouse gas emissions

NHS 24 aims to become a net-zero organisation by 2040 for the sources of greenhouse gas emissions set out in the table below. The table sets out the areas of greenhouse gas emissions that NHS Boards are required to report on annually. At present NHS 24 only have baseline data for the year 2019/20, which was calculated for us by an external consultancy as part of the development of a Net Zero Route map. We are currently working on robust mechanisms to calculate our emissions on an annual basis.

		<b>Amount of greenhouse gas (tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, tCO<sub>2</sub>e)</b>
<b>Source</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>2019/20</b>
<b>Building energy use</b>	Greenhouse gases produced in providing electricity and energy heat for NHS buildings	1,857
<b>Non-medical F-gas use</b>	Greenhouse gases used for things like refrigeration and air conditioning	Not available
<b>Medical gases</b>	Greenhouse gases used in anaesthetics - nitrous oxide (N <sub>2</sub> O), Entonox (which contains nitrous oxide), desflurane, sevoflurane and isoflurane	Not applicable to NHS 24
<b>Metered dose inhaler propellant</b>	Greenhouse gases used as a propellant in inhalers used to treat asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (COPD)	Not applicable to NHS 24
<b>NHS fleet use</b>	Greenhouse gases produced by NHS vehicles	12
<b>Waste</b>	The greenhouse gases produced by the disposal and treatment of waste produced by the NHS	11

<b>Water</b>	The greenhouse gas produced from the use of water and the treatment of waste water	6
<b>Business travel</b>	Greenhouse gases produced by staff travel for work purposes, not using NHS vehicles.	118
<b>Sub-Total</b>		<b>2,004</b>
<b>Carbon sequestration</b>	The amount of carbon dioxide captured per by woodland, trees, grassland and shrubs growing on NHS grounds.	0
<b>Greenhouse gas emissions minus carbon sequestration</b>		<b>2,004</b>

#### 4. National Sustainability Assessment

NHS Scotland has developed a National Sustainability Assessment Tool (NSAT) which all Health Boards use on an annual basis to measure their progress across sixteen different areas of sustainability.

In 2021/22, NHS 24's draft score was 46% (bronze) overall. Our three highest scoring areas were Greenspace (60%); Welfare (60%) and Environmental management (58%). Our three areas with the most room for improvement were: Procurement (36%); Green House Gases (38%) and Ethics; Awareness and Waste (each with 40%). Scores are currently being audited nationally and this report will be updated once final scores are available.

#### 5. Climate Change Adaptation

The climate is changing due to the greenhouse gases already emitted into the atmosphere. While efforts to reduce the rate and scale of climate change continue, we must also adapt to new conditions we are facing.

The changing climate is increasing risks for health and health services. More information on these risks in the UK can be found in the UK Climate Change Committee's Health and Social Care Briefing available here: [www.ukclimaterisk.org/independent-assessment-ccra3/briefings/](http://www.ukclimaterisk.org/independent-assessment-ccra3/briefings/)

To better understand the impact of climate change on NHS 24 the people and places we serve, we have already carried out a Flood Risk Assessment. We are now working on our wider Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Plan, in line with requirements for this to be published in March 2023. This forthcoming Adaptation Plan will set out the actions we will take to build resilience and prepare for the increasing risks from climate change to NHS 24 and the people and places we serve. Our current public Winter Health Campaign includes signposting to Scottish Government sources

of support for home energy efficiency, including insulation, which can help improve people's home resilience to future extreme heat as well as winter cold.

## **6. Building Energy**

We aim to use renewable heat sources for all buildings owned by NHS 24 by 2038.

NHS 24 is currently in the process of scoping and defining meaningful data extraction information and methods from various locations such as utility bills and energy meters. The information will be input to a central system for ease of future reporting. When this work is complete for all buildings we will be able to report on kWh / MWh of energy used and the organisation will then have meaningful data to create realistic reduction targets.

## **7. Sustainable Care**

The way we provide care influences our environmental impact and greenhouse gas emissions. NHS Scotland has three national priority areas for making care more sustainable – anaesthesia, surgery and respiratory medicine.

### ***7.1 Anaesthesia and surgery***

NHS 24 does not provide surgery and anaesthesia services, and so no information on these priority areas is included in this report.

### ***7.2 Respiratory medicine***

Greenhouse gases are used as a propellant in metered dose inhalers used to treat asthma and COPD. Most of the emissions from inhalers are from the use of reliever inhalers – Short Acting Beta Agonists (SABAs). By helping people to manage their condition more effectively, we can improve patient care and reduce emissions. There are also more environmentally friendly inhalers such as dry powder inhalers which can be used where clinically appropriate.

NHS 24 does not currently have any role in the direct prescription of inhalers, and so have not to date taken any specific action to reduce emissions from inhalers. We do however already include general information in relation to medicines management, highlighting the importance of avoiding over-ordering medication which may expire before use, to reduce waste, and of the importance of the proper disposal of any unused medication, including inhalers.

As part of our forthcoming NHS 24 Climate Emergency and Sustainability Action Plan we propose to include an action to review the existing information that is provided by NHS 24 in relation to asthma and COPD management, including on the availability of environmentally friendly inhalers, which may be suitable for some patients. This is in line with our commitment to the principles of Realistic Medicine, which include reducing waste and harm.

### **7.3 Other areas**

NHS 24 has a strategic ambition to provide sustainable, valued services closer to home; the right care, in the right place, at the right time. This can include providing information, advice and services that reduce patients' need to travel or helping them to find appropriate local services that reduce the *distance* they need to travel, both of which can help to reduce patient travel-related emissions, although we do not currently have a mechanism for quantifying this.

Our ongoing programme of work in relation to the Redesign of Urgent Care (RUC) aims to streamline patient pathways to access high quality, clinically safe and effective services, contributing to a reduction in harm and waste across the wider health and care system, which should in turn lead to reduced emissions, including because of care delivered closer to home. We are currently exploring whether it might be possible to capture patient travel data as part of ongoing evaluation of the RUC programme, to understand whether new patient pathways are supporting reduced travel-related emissions.

## **8. Travel and Transport**

Domestic transport (not including international aviation and shipping) produced 24% of Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions in 2020. Car travel is the type of travel which contributes the most to those emissions.

NHS Scotland is supporting a shift to a healthier and more sustainable transport system, in line with the government's commitment to reduce overall car kilometres in Scotland by 20 per cent by 2030, including by reducing people's need to travel; supporting people to access what they need more locally, thereby reducing the distance travelled; and prioritising active travel (travel by walking, wheeling and cycling) and public transport. Where car use is still required people should be supported to consider how they can share or combine car journeys.

It is important to remember that while electric vehicles may have zero 'tailpipe' emissions, they still have an emissions profile, including the emissions used to produce and maintain them, as well as energy emissions if the electricity to charge them is from a non-renewable source. Furthermore, reducing the number of private cars in our communities has wider benefits for individual and population-level health and wellbeing, including from improved air quality (electric vehicles still contribute to air pollution from particles generated from their tyres and brakes); reduced road danger, and increased opportunities for physical activity.

NHS 24 have continued to support home / hybrid working where appropriate. A process has been put in place to review the travel mileage claimed for by each directorate. Cost of payments for travel mileage is now included within budget statements to raise awareness of the financial, as well as environmental impacts of travel behaviours. NHS 24 continues to work towards becoming a 'Cycle Friendly Employer', including by taking actions such as ensuring availability of the salary sacrifice scheme for purchase of cycles; and suitable workplace facilities to support cycling to work. Locations and accessibility of our centres remain a key consideration

within our Estates Strategy, and mapping of the home location of our staff has been undertaken.

Going forward, travel and transport is one of the key areas that we will focus on in the development of our forthcoming NHS 24 Climate Emergency and Sustainability Action Plan. Our new Workforce Strategy commits to continue to build on the flexible working changes that emerged through COVID-19 which included hybrid working, including committing to offering more flexible, varied roles and opportunities for remote and hybrid working. We will also be reviewing our existing Travel and Accommodation Policy, to ensure it is aligned with the our CESP ambitions, as well as supporting Scottish Government’s commitment to a 20% reduction in car kilometres by 2030. We will explore opportunities to further engage and support staff to understand and experience the benefits of using active travel and public transport, both for their personal health wellbeing as well as to support wider community health and wellbeing and address the climate emergency.

We are working to remove all petrol and diesel fuelled cars from our fleet by 2025. The following table sets out how many renewable powered and fossil fuel vehicles were in NHS 24’s fleet at the end of March 2022.

	<b>Renewable powered vehicles</b>	<b>Fossil fuel vehicles</b>	<b>Total vehicles</b>	<b>Percentage renewable powered vehicles</b>
<b>Cars</b>	1	6	7	14%
<b>Light Commercial Vehicles</b>	0	0	0	N/A
<b>Heavy vehicles</b>	0	0	0	N/A

The following table sets out how many cycles and ecycles were in NHS 24’s fleet at the end of March 2022.

	<b>Number</b>
<b>Cycles</b>	0
<b>ecycles</b>	0

## **9. Greenspace and Biodiversity**

In addition to health benefits for patients and staff, investment in greenspace around hospitals and healthcare centres helps tackle climate change and biodiversity loss.

NHS 24 has minimal greenspace across its sites. Because of this, NSAT questions relating to nature and biodiversity were deemed to be not applicable to NHS in 2021/22 and so priority was not given to acting to improve greenspace and increase biodiversity. NHS 24 contributed to a joint Biodiversity Duty Report, 2018-2020, in conjunction with five other national Health Boards. We are planning to collaborate with the same five Health Boards to the next joint Biodiversity Duty Report, 2021-2023, which is due for publication in December 2023.



We do however, as part of our forthcoming NHS 24 Climate Emergency and Sustainability Action Plan, propose to review the role that we can potentially play in improving greenspace and increasing biodiversity. This could, as a minimum, include exploring options to signpost staff and service users to the health and wellbeing benefits of greenspace and biodiversity, and to encourage them to make use of, protect and seek opportunities to enhance or expand quality or quantity of greenspace and biodiversity in their local communities, in line with information provided by Nature Scot on 'Our Natural Health Service' and via the Scottish Governments 'Lets Do Net Zero' website.

## **10. Sustainable Procurement, Circular Economy and Waste**

Earth Overshoot Day marks the date when our demand for resources exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year. In 2020, the Global Earth Overshoot Day was 22nd August. In 2021, it was 29th July. The current global trend shows a concerning picture of over consumption. For the UK, the picture is more worrying. In 2022, the UK's Earth Overshoot Day was 19th May. The current level of consumption of materials is not sustainable, it is the root cause of the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution.

We aim to reduce the impact that our use of resources has on the environment through adopting circular economy principles, fostering a culture of stewardship and working with other UK health services to maximise our contribution to reducing supply chain emissions to net-zero by 2045.

Procurement of goods and services for NHS 24 is carried out by the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) Procurement Team. In the year 2021/22 SAS Procurement improvement priorities focussed on updating strategy, policy and processes in relation to requirements around ethical procurement; fair work practices; cyber security; data protection and whistle blowing.

In the current year, 2022/23, SAS Procurement have updated their strategy, policy and procedures in line with Scottish Government's Climate Emergency and Sustainability requirements, including supporting an Anchor Institutions approach, and the requirement for all Health Boards to become net zero organisations by 2040. SAS Procurement is committed to using the suite of Scottish Government Sustainable Procurement Tools and guidance that has been made available to public bodies to assess current levels of performance and inform the additional actions required to achieve sustainable procurement outcomes.

Current plans to improve the climate and sustainability impacts of procurement include:

- Broadening access to contracts for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises; the third sector and supported businesses
- Looking for innovation and harnessing more sustainable technologies
- Encouraging suppliers to offer more goods and services with lower greenhouse gas emissions

- Expanding the use of community benefits requirements within contracts
- Embedding fair work practices
- Promoting equality and tackling inequality
- Including of life-cycle impact mapping as part of the sustainability test

We want to reduce the amount of waste we produce and increase how much of it is recycled.

NHS 24 is currently in the process of scoping and defining meaningful data extraction information and methods from waste suppliers. When this work is complete for all buildings we will be able to report on tonnes of landfill, incineration, recycled, food and clinical waste produced by the organisation, then we will have meaningful data to create realistic reduction targets.

## **11. Environmental stewardship**

Environmental stewardship means acting as a steward, or caretaker, of the environment and taking responsibility for the actions which affect our shared environmental quality. This includes any activities which may adversely impact on land, air and water, either through the unsustainable use of resources or the generation of waste and pollution. Having an Environmental Management System (EMS) in place provides a framework that helps to achieve our environmental goals through consistent review, evaluation, and improvement of our environmental performance.

The programme team is currently working with departments across the organisation to identify what we done as an organisation last year to improve our environmental performance and what we are doing this year.

## **12. Sustainable construction**

We do not currently have any live or planned construction projects, so have not provided information on this topic as part of this Annual Report.

## **13. Sustainable Communities**

The climate emergency undermines the foundations of good health and deepens inequalities for our most deprived communities. The NHS touches every community in Scotland. We have a responsibility to use our abilities as a large employer, a major buyer, and one of the most recognised brands in the world – an ‘anchor’ organisation – to protect and support our communities’ health in every way that we can.

Our new workforce strategy sets out a commitment to strengthen our position as an Anchor Institution, including through work as an inclusive employer, to ensure our workforce is reflective of the communities we serve, and of the communities where our sites are based. By encouraging applicants from local communities close to our call centres, we can reduce the distance travelled by employees, thereby reducing staff-

travel related emissions. A commitment to an Anchor Institutions Approach is also highlighted within our Public Health Framework and draft Action Plan, and as part of as part of our forthcoming NHS 24 Climate Emergency and Sustainability Action Plan we will explore what additional actions we can take to support local communities, in line with an Anchor Institutions approach. This will build on previous work by NHS 24 to consider the socio-economic impacts of changes to site locations, which is now embedded as part of the non-financial decision-making criteria within all Estate Programme Business Cases.

To support improved resilience to climate change within our local communities we have ensured that our current public Winter Health Campaign includes signposting to Scottish Government sources of support for home energy efficiency, including insulation, which can help improve people's home resilience to future extreme heat as well as winter cold. Our campaign also signposts people to the Met Office 'Weather Ready' information, including advice on getting your home and property winter ready; protecting property from flooding; and travelling in storms, rain and strong wind. We will also work with Public Health Scotland on the development and dissemination of future Heat Wave Plan resources.