

NHUC Green Plan 2026-29

Foreword

I am pleased to introduce our Green Plan for 2026–2029. This plan reflects our continued commitment to reducing our environmental impact while delivering safe, responsive and high-quality care for our communities.

Over recent years, we have made meaningful progress by embedding more sustainable models of care, through digital innovation, strengthening our partnerships and improving how we use resources across our services. These achievements provide a strong foundation for the next phase of our journey.

This Green Plan sets out a clear and practical approach to supporting the NHS Net Zero ambition. It recognises that sustainability is not a separate agenda, but integral to how we design and deliver care, support our workforce, and work with patients and partners. From reducing travel and emissions to improving efficiency and encouraging sustainable behaviours, every part of our organisation has a role to play.

Success will depend on the collective effort of our staff, partners, and communities. I am confident that, together, we will continue to build a more sustainable, resilient organisation—one that protects both the health of our patients and the environment we all share.

Steve Clarke, Director of Strategy & OD and Deputy CEO

Introduction

NHUC is committed to reducing the environmental impact of its operations while continuing to deliver safe, high-quality patient care. This Green Plan sets out NHUC's approach to continuing to support the NHS Net Zero ambition and embedding sustainability into organisational culture, decision-making, and service delivery.

Since the introduction of its initial Green Plan in 2022, NHUC has made steady progress in embedding sustainability into service delivery and operational practice, while maintaining a strong focus on patient care.

Key achievements include the expansion of VirtualCare@Home and wider use of remote consultations, reducing the need for patient travel and supporting more efficient, lower-carbon models of care. Our partnerships working with local trusts in the delivery of Urgent Treatment Centres offers less resource-intensive care settings and the introduction of Electronic Prescription Services (EPS) and digital patient feedback mechanisms have significantly reduced reliance on paper-based processes.

NHUC has also taken steps to improve resource efficiency through medicines rationalisation within Same Day Care, helping to minimise waste and ensure more appropriate use of clinical resources. In digital infrastructure, the adoption of refurbished mobile devices has reduced the organisation's carbon footprint associated with IT procurement.

Progress has also been achieved through partnership working across estates, delivering energy-saving improvements and increasing the efficiency of NHUC's operational footprint. Additionally, the launch of the Home Visiting Service has enabled more care to be delivered in patients' homes, reducing unnecessary travel while supporting the development of a more efficient, lower-emission fleet model.

Collectively, these actions demonstrate NHUC's commitment to practical, achievable sustainability improvements and provide a strong foundation for further progress over the 2026–2029 period.

NHS Net Zero

The NHS is committed to achieving Net Zero for the emissions it controls by 2040, and for the wider emissions it influences by 2045. Focus areas include travel, estates, medicines, supply chain, and models of care. Integrated Care Systems are required to align providers to local Net Zero trajectories. NHUC plays a vital role in supporting this ambition through the way we deliver care, manage resources, and work with our partners.

Our Green Plan Vision

Healthier communities through sustainable care.

Purpose

Reduce NHUC's environmental impact in line with NHS Net Zero ambitions to protect the health and wellbeing of our communities while maintaining safe, accessible, high quality patient care.

Our Net Zero Commitment

NHUC has committed to supporting NHS Net Zero as follows:

- Reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2040 for emissions we have control over
- Reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2045 for emissions we can only influence

Objectives

The following objectives establish the key outcomes NHUC aims to achieve, providing a clear framework to guide action, measure progress, and drive continuous improvement in sustainability:

- Reduce carbon emissions from clinical and non-clinical activities
- Improve energy and resource efficiency
- Promote and deliver sustainable models of care
- Support staff to adopt environmentally responsible behaviours

Governance & Leadership

Strong governance and leadership are essential to ensure accountability, oversight, and delivery of this plan. NHUC will embed sustainability within existing structures to support coordinated and effective implementation.

- **Green Plan Lead** – Director of Strategy & OD and Deputy CEO
- **Operational delivery** - Corporate Services Management Group (quarterly review)
- **Assurance** - Finance, Digital & Innovation Committee, including annual review

Technical

Understanding our emissions and the technical requirements behind NHS Net Zero helps NHUC target the areas where we can make the greatest impact.

What We Measure - Understanding our carbon footprint. NHS Net Zero requires NHUC to measure emissions across:

- NHUC fleet and fuel use.
- Electricity use in our offices and clinical sites.
- Patient and staff travel, medicines, supply chain, waste, digital services.
- Accurate baselining enables meaningful targets and reporting.

Where Our Emissions Come From - Key contributors within NHUC:

- **Travel:** staff mileage, home visiting service fleet, and patient journeys avoided through virtual care.
- **Estates:** energy use in UTCs, offices and partner-managed buildings.
- **Digital:** device lifecycle, refurbished equipment, and reduced paper use.
- **Medicines:** prescribing patterns, stock management and waste.
- **Supply chain:** clinical consumables, single-use plastics, and logistics.

How We Reduce Them - Technical levers for change:

- Expand virtual and remote care to reduce unnecessary patient and staff travel.
- Optimise the dedicated home visiting fleet and transition to electric vehicles.
- Improve energy efficiency through estates partnerships and greener relocations.
- Use refurbished devices and digital solutions to cut resource use.
- Apply sustainability impact assessments to business cases.
- Strengthen data collection to support transparent reporting.

Our Approach

Sustainability embedded throughout - Environmental responsibility will be integrated into clinical models, digital transformation, estates, procurement and workforce development, shaping decisions at every level of the organisation.

Key Focus Areas

Sustainable Models of Care - Transforming how care is delivered is a key opportunity to reduce environmental impact while improving access and outcomes. NHUC will prioritise efficient, modern care models that reduce resource use and unnecessary activity:

- Digital and Remote-led service delivery
- Provision of less resource-intensive care models

Energy, Estates & Transport - Emissions linked to buildings and travel represent a significant proportion of NHUC's environmental impact. This focuses on improving efficiency, reducing energy consumption, and transitioning to lower-emission transport solutions:

- Support buildings efficiency, monitor energy usage and reduction targets
- Transition of SDC fleet to zero-emission tailpipe vehicles

Procurement, Resource & Waste Management - The way resources are purchased, used, and disposed of has a direct environmental impact. NHUC will promote responsible procurement, reduce waste, and ensure resources are managed as efficiently and sustainably as possible:

- Responsible purchasing; reduction in unnecessary stock and waste
- Reduce single-use and paper, maximise recycling and sustainable IT disposal

Staff Engagement

Staff play a critical role in delivering the Green Plan. NHUC will support, empower, and engage colleagues to adopt sustainable practices and contribute to environmental improvements across the organisation. We will:

- Communicate priorities and updates regularly
- Encourage ideas and input
- Include our Green Plan during corporate induction

Public & Patient Engagement

Working with patients and communities is essential to achieving sustainable healthcare. NHUC will promote awareness and encourage behaviours that support both individual health and environmental sustainability. We will:

- Promote sustainable service use and communicate impact
- Work with community partners and support targeted campaigns
- Co-design services with patients that support sustainable care

Implementation

Year 1 - Mobilise

Strengthen governance and reporting, complete carbon baselining, and embed key service models (Remote Monitoring and Home Visiting). Begin fleet transition (including initial EV infrastructure) and pilot digital innovations such as Ambient AI.

Year 2 – Deliver & Expand

Electrify initial fleet vehicles, implement estates energy-efficiency improvements, and expand sustainable practices (refurbished IT, reduced paper use, medicines optimisation, and waste reduction). Improve recycling and reduce single-use items.

Year 3 – Scale & Embed

Scale fleet electrification and optimise operations, fully embed digital-first pathways, integrate sustainability into estates planning, and strengthen sustainable procurement. Increase care

delivery through community-based, close to home services in line with the ‘left-shift’ and review progress to inform the next Green Plan.

Monitoring and Reporting

Robust monitoring and reporting will ensure progress is tracked, performance is transparent, and actions remain aligned with national guidance and organisational priorities. We will identify and define key metrics demonstrating progress against this plan.

Delivery

Delivery of this plan will be co-ordinated via the Corporate Services Management Group in conjunction with the wider Service Management Groups. The NHUC Management Executive maintains responsibility for decision making relating to policy, budget and risk.

Review

The Green Plan will be reviewed annually by the Finance, Digital & Innovation Committee to reflect progress, evolving priorities, and updated national guidance, ensuring it remains relevant, effective, and deliverable.