

In June 2019, the UK became the first major economy to commit the country to net zero emissions by 2050. According to the [Committee on Climate Change](#), if other countries follow the UK's lead there could be a 50% chance of avoiding a 'catastrophic' temperature rise by the end of the century. In support of this, the NHS, leading from the front, has committed to becoming the first national healthcare system to achieve carbon neutrality by 2040, reducing emissions by an ambitious 80% within the next 10 years. To do this, the newly formed integrated care systems (ICS's) now have the opportunity to work collaboratively with local councils, hospitals and the community to adopt 'greener' attitudes and work practices. These can then help make a measurable positive impact on carbon emissions and the environment.

The heart of the NHS mission lies in delivering exceptional care in a way that reduces the incidence and severity of disease and the care required. This can be done by providing care in ways that are less carbon and resource-intensive

while reducing costs and emissions, to create a positive impact on public and environmental health.

Greener leaner digital tools

To help define a strategy for this, the [What Good Looks Like framework](#), sets out clear guidelines for good practices that can help digital transformation and sustainability. The NHS can benefit from innovative clinical communication and workflow products that support these good practices by making processes leaner, affordable and responsible in their use of resources, by fulfilling these conditions:

Less paper, less printing

The estimated annual cost of paper storage for each Trust is an extraordinary £500,000 to £1million and in total the amount of paper used in the NHS is equivalent to crossing the world 174 times. Hence when clinical information is shared digitally in a secure, accessible way it reduces



significant carbon footprint from overuse of resources such as paper and printer toner.

Develop efficient data centres

Current practices in the NHS show inefficiencies when systems don't "speak to each other" and there is a disconnect between patient history, assessments, investigations and follow-ups, all of which lead to poor use of hospital resources. Integrated communication tools with access to EPR and EDMS, help improve this as all patient-related data can be shared between all clinicians involved in their care. Meanwhile secure cloud storage of all shared information and automation of clinical processes such as updated test results, which are key emission-savers, ensure information is accessible, when and where it is needed.

Use fewer resources for greater efficiency

Current practices indicate widespread overuse of resources across the NHS, such as medical supplies, medications, lab and radiological investigations. Intuitive digital tools that allow clinicians to send and respond to critical alerts, messages, set priorities, facilitate digital handovers and check patient updates in one place, can improve this decision-making and reduce reliance on manual processes that waste time and resources and can fall prey to delays and human error.

Support BYOD

Carbon emissions are significantly increased when multiple uncoordinated electronic devices with inefficient access to patient information are used. Digital communication tools that support BYOD practices can hence reduce carbon footprint by mitigating the cost of procuring and managing an excessive number of devices and the training for staff to use them. These integrated tools on personal devices, can also 'speak' to multiple systems within the hospital while protecting the privacy of clinical staff, all in one place. This facilitates leaner practices for undertaking clinical tasks and digital handovers,

granting clinicians the ability to make swift and efficient clinical decisions anytime, anywhere.

Optimise communication between clinical staff

Digital tools that provide instant access to all patient information and clinical staff in one place can reduce unnecessary use of hospital resources and delays in caring for patients. They help coordinate multidisciplinary consultations, diagnoses and clinical decisions, which minimise emissions from patient readmission and travel.

Embracing digital tools that help staff work smarter and more efficiently can therefore help considerably towards reducing the load on hospital resources, improving efficiency for better patient care and supporting the NHS to adopt sustainable practices to reach carbon net zero goals.

Over 1 million people have contact with NHS clinicians every 36 hours. The Centre for Sustainable Healthcare (CSH) has found that empowering clinicians to tackle the environmental sustainability of care motivates them to get involved in improving their service, saves money by implementing sustainable innovations and encourages innovative thinking to create models of care that are preventative, patient-centered, leaner and use technology to protect the public and the environment.