

Sustainability Plan



1. Introduction and Background

Connect Health recognises that, through the delivery of its services, it will have an impact on the natural environment within which it operates. Working over a wide range of locations, delivering varied services, and utilising the skills and expertise of many personnel means that this impact is unavoidable. However, it is possible to make changes in the way we operate to minimise negative impacts, to make decisions that have a positive outcome, and to contribute towards a more environmentally conscious and less impactful future.

This document recognises that the company will impact on the natural environment and establishes what actions and programmes we can deliver to both minimise any negative effects of our activities whilst enhancing and promoting those that can deliver a positive outcome. The results of investigating our current environmental impacts have resulted in the development of this Plan; a document that outlines the Company approach to environmental matters and how our success in delivering tangible benefits in environmental performance can be delivered and, importantly, measured.

Key environmental concerns, such as climate change, represent serious threats to the global environment. We commit to playing our part in adapting our activities and reviewing our processes to minimise any negative impacts we may have on the environment. Connect Health is committed to adopting and implementing sustainable approaches, particularly in relation to emissions reduction and promotion of good global citizenship. Connect Health is also committed to supporting the NHS England commitment to carbon reduction via its 'Delivering a net zero National Health Service' commitment.



2. The Basis for and Drivers Behind the Development of a Sustainability Plan

Environmental stewardship is closely intertwined and affects the social and economic fabric of the societies within which we operate. Without action, the potential environmental crises we face will result in greater pressure on resources, adjustments to living standards and working conditions and the reduction of the health of the population. The consensus now is not to ask if we should do something but to demonstrate that we are contributing towards mitigating the risks we all now face. The link between environmental management and healthcare provision may not be immediately obvious, but there is undoubtedly a relationship between the delivery of services such as those by Connect Health and wider environmental management. For example:

- We use resources such as equipment, materials, and energy – all of which require manufacturing, distribution and disposal at end of life. This can lead to contamination, waste and pollution at all stages of the life cycle of the product/utility.
- Our property portfolio requires heating, ventilation and power, directly contributing towards emissions to the atmosphere that can then lead to climate change and a reduction in air quality.
- Our employees travel between sites to support patients – generating emissions, directly and indirectly as a result, contributing to poor air quality (both locally and globally) and climate change.

Public health can be affected by environmental impact. For example:

- Changes in climate will impact on our ability to maintain food chains – potentially leading to shortages and issues with maintaining a healthy diet.
- Extremes in heat and cold can lead to increased mortality rates, particularly amongst vulnerable members of the population. Poor air quality may lead to increased levels of respiratory illness.
- Availability of clean water supplies becomes increasingly difficult – affecting public health and, in extreme cases, resulting in conflict.

Whilst some of the issues and concerns may not appear to affect our lives significantly in the UK, we need to recognise we are part of a wider global problem and need to play our part accordingly. Should the scale of impact continue to grow the apparent minor inconvenience of today will become a significant political and economic issue in the future. Ultimately, impacting our overall quality of life and the funds that support our services. There are numerous and varied drivers that resulted in the development of this plan. Some of the key considerations that have influenced the content of this plan include:

- An appreciation that our own colleagues and patients have a growing expectation that the company is considering environmental impact and that it is taking appropriate action.
- Corporate governance structures recognise that compliance with environmental regulations is a key requirement for excellence in business delivery.
- Noting that improvements in environmental management can have wider business benefits such as cost savings and efficiency gains.
- To meet the expectation of key stakeholders such as NHS England and the patients to whom we deliver services. This includes fulfillment of contractual obligations placed upon Connect Health.

2.1 Personnel

Some of the loudest and most significant arguments for addressing our environmental performance come from within our business. We will support those who wish to be involved and engage with them to assist in the implementation of actions to support our wider aims and the objectives of this plan.

Given that the company's most important and largest asset is its employees we recognise that their involvement will be paramount to the success of delivering our environmental objectives. It is our colleagues who will be required to adjust their working patterns, to travel in less polluting means and to use resources more efficiently etc. This is why their input and engagement is highlighted throughout subsequent sections. Specific support for employee engagement is described in section 7 below.

2.2 Governance

We operate within regulatory structures that include key requirements in environmental management. These relate to a diverse range of concerns, from waste management, energy use and utility consumption. The company is committed to meeting all its compliance obligations but will also, through delivery of this plan, go beyond compliance where this is practical and possible.

This commitment is supported by our environmental policy that sits alongside this Plan. See section 8 on fulfilment of our legal obligations.



2.3 Business Benefits

Good environmental stewardship delivers wider benefits to the company which, in turn, allows us to deliver a cost-effective service to commissioners and customers.

For example:

- Efficiencies in utility (electricity, gas, and water) can lead to reduced cost, improving the financial performance of the organisation.
- Reviewing how we work with a view to environmental efficiencies can have broader process and activity benefits – such as enhanced productivity against resources consumed.
- Demonstrating excellence in environmental stewardship provides assurance to interested parties, including staff, suppliers and clients. (see next section also).
- Compliance against environmental requirements is easily achieved – demonstrated to interested parties and regulators. This lowers risk.

2.4 Stakeholder and Client Expectations

The NHS has set itself clear commitments for environmental improvement, closely related to wider government legal requirements to reduce carbon emissions. For example, for those emissions the NHS can control it has set a target of net zero [1] carbon emissions by 2040 (with an interim target of 80% reduction by 2032). In addition, there is an expectation for those emissions it can influence (such as those associated with service providers like Connect Health) it has set a target to net zero by 2045 and 80% reduction by 2039.

In 2021, the Independent Healthcare Provider Network (IHPN) launched a voluntary industry-wide pledge for the UK independent healthcare sector to achieve net zero emissions for scope 1 and 2 by 2035 and scope 3 by 2045. Connect Health has signed up to this pledge.

The relationship between the NHS and Connect Health is replicated through the supply chain as Connect Health influences its own suppliers and contractors. This relationship is also an important element in how we can contribute towards a more holistic view to environmental management outside of our own organisation. See section 6.4.

The plan developed and described within this document has been fully endorsed by the Board who will ensure suitable and sufficient resources are allocated to its successful delivery. We recognise that this is a starting point and that aims and objectives will change through time, meaning that the journey we set out on today will probably require some changes in direction and the adoption of new or unexpected initiatives.

This is a rolling plan, but will be subject to review. Our key environmental objectives will be set on an annual basis – some of these not being finalized until our full baseline performance data is understood.

[1] Net zero – this is defined that direct emissions are removed wherever possible and if there remains residual carbon emissions these are neutralised by removing or supporting the removal of atmospheric carbon elsewhere (for example, by investing in carbon capture, new forestry etc.). See full definition at the Carbon Trust Net zero | [The Carbon Trust](#).

3. Scope

The Sustainability Plan applies to all parts of the organisation including head/ administrative offices, our operational locations from which services are delivered, all colleagues, contractors, and stakeholders. The plan refers throughout to Connect Health – but is relevant to both Connect Health Group and Connect Pain Services. The plan also provides guidance on how we may influence other interested parties (suppliers in particular) so that they can join us in developing a wider and more inclusive approach to managing the resources at our disposal.

Connect Health operates within a wide range of locations and property types; from our head office in Newcastle to using small spaces within local GP surgeries around the country. None of these sites are owned.

Currently Connect Health operate from over 100 different locations throughout England. Of these only a handful are classed as P1 (Priority 1) locations for which the company has full control of facilities management and lease arrangements. It is in these locations that there is the greatest potential to affect change in behaviour, invest in environmental management and make a positive impact. Whilst the degree of control at other different locations will vary, our commitment is always to deliver the maximum benefit in all locations – through direct control or through influence.

4. Key Principles

The key principles that have guided this plan include:

- Our priorities will lie in the delivery of actions that will have the most immediate positive impact.
- A key element of our plan is to deliver compliance – not only for regulatory requirements but to meet the expectations of our customers, suppliers, neighbours, patients, and other interested parties.
- We embrace the principle of introducing and encouraging small changes in most of what we do, realising that the culmination of these small changes across the whole business will have a significant effect. Just because an action may seem insignificant does not mean that it will not contribute to the collective effort.
- That to deliver change we must set ourselves objectives, set out plans and allocate resources for their achievement. Furthermore, we will report progress to further influence our own plans and to report results to all interested parties. There must be a means of measuring success.

We recognise that this plan is part of a long-term commitment to environmental improvement. With advances in guidance, technology, and best practice we hope to further enhance and improve our performance – this will require a re-examination of the key topics listed below (in section 6) as well as a re-appraisal of the actions that are feasible and cost effective for us to consider.

5. Resources, Roles and Responsibilities

For success in the delivery of this plan roles and responsibilities have been defined and shall be communicated to those listed. An outline of roles and responsibilities and to note persons accountable for the success or otherwise of this plan is given below:

Person/Position/ Group	Role and function relating to the Sustainability Plan
The Board of Connect Health	To review and approve the Sustainability Plan - allocating resources as required for its successful completion. Monitoring progress and supporting those with responsibilities for its implementation. Considering the results of an annual Sustainability Plan progress report.
Senior Leadership Team	To accept the Sustainability Plan as agreed by the Board and to implement the actions it contains. Responsible for the delivery of key actions and deliverables as described within the Sustainability Plan. Collation of key data and information to support the monitoring of progress against KPI. Cascade down key actions and responsibilities to members of the Management Team. To seek assistance from the Board if required. Accountable for the delivery of Sustainability Plan actions.
Director of Governance and Risk	The member of the Senior Leadership Team who will be responsible for the success of the Sustainability Plan and be responsible for the collation of the annual progress report.
All Staff	Understand their role and responsibilities as communicated to them from this Sustainability Plan. To act with diligence and care to ensure that the company demonstrates best practice in all elements of environmental management.



6. Environmental Impacts of Connect Health

To establish where our priorities might lie regarding environmental management and resource allocation an exercise has been undertaken to identify what are the key environmental issues and concerns within the organisations and which of these are likely to be having the greatest impact.

This plan focuses upon the following that have been identified as areas key to delivering improvements in environmental management:

- Energy Use and associated carbon emissions
- Waste management
- Travel and Transport
- Relationship with suppliers / Procurement

Key performance indicators have been devised to ensure that the company will then be able to illustrate progress being made – sharing this within management or with wider personnel as necessary.

6.1.1 Energy Use and Associated Carbon Management

Energy consumption and the direct and indirect use of fossil fuels is seen as a significant and concerning issue. Key to this is the contribution energy use makes to the emissions of carbon and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. This has the potential to affect the climate and cause disruption to weather patterns, causing further impact on infrastructure, agriculture and areas prone to flooding or sea level rise.

Energy requirements for the business relate primarily to heating, lighting and operation of equipment (such as personal computers). Building use is split between those that have an administrative/managerial function and those that are for service delivery and are used for hosting interaction with patients.

Interestingly, a Healthcare with Harm report indicated that energy use for heating and cooling accounted for 40% of emissions made in the sector.

The key items to consider (when planning any actions to address energy use) are as follows:

- The provision of heating/ventilation etc is the largest consumer of energy within clinical settings, and is a significant factor within administrative settings.
- IT (including server operations and large numbers of computers) is of greatest significance at head office.
- Lighting use is significant at all locations.
- Staff numbers affect energy use in areas such as catering

Activities take place in a wide range of premises all of which are hired/leased or supplied by or from the client with little or no direct control available to Connect Health. Connect Health does not own any commercial property.

Source: healthcare without Harm 2019 report - Health care climate footprint report | Health CareWithout Harm (noharm-uscanada.org)

Building use is based on the following types of occupation:

- Commercial lease (Priority 1)- Connect Health have a lease for sole occupancy of a building or facility. This type of arrangement allows Connect Health to have some flexibility on how the space is used or managed. There will be varying degrees of responsibility between Connect Health and the relevant landlord with regard to investment in infrastructure that may deliver improved energy efficiency. Connect will pay for energy consumption directly. In most cases the main control available to Connect is in how energy may be used.
- Lease - Connect Health occupies part of a building or facility and pays a proportion of energy costs within rental charges. The level of control may be similar as within the commercial lease but Connect might not enjoy the financial benefits that may be accrued from reducing energy consumption.
- Service Level Agreement - when Connect Health have an agreement with a property to use facilities for set number of days/times over a period of time. The space may be shared with other users who occupy it at other times. This relates primarily to spaces within which services are delivered in a clinical setting. A rent may be charged that includes a standard contribution towards utility costs.
- Sessional - this is occasions when Connect simply books a session within a space as required. This is on an ad hoc basis and is designed to meet client/patient needs.

Given limitations on changes to physical infrastructure, the following are the likely key actions to be considered when addressing energy use within Connect Health:

- Full engagement of staff and other interested parties - programme of awareness and information to change behaviour and make everyone more energy efficient.
- Consideration of energy ratings when purchasing replacement equipment
- Improved control of energy systems - such as heating and lighting to ensure it used only when required. Heating and lighting timings and settings to provide suitable working environment without excessive use.
- Where possible, seek tariffs and energy suppliers with high or 100% renewable content.

6.1.2 Measuring Energy Use

Energy consumption in a leased building may be measured – from invoicing and from access to meters etc where available. The costs of energy used within buildings that Connect only partly occupies or for which occupancy is intermittent is extremely difficult or impossible to quantify with any accuracy. It is possible to apply reasonable estimates to what is used and this forms the basis of calculation of emissions.

By establishing baseline data on consumption and by also then monitoring this on a regular basis there are two benefits to the company;

- The results of actions can be quickly assessed and monitored to establish what is working and what is not – therefore influencing the priorities given to further actions. Simply, progress against objectives can be assessed.
- With good data being shared within the organisation the general awareness of energy as a business resource that requires careful management improves. With staff awareness a key requirement to improve performance this is a vital tool in the delivery of the Sustainability Plan.

Whilst this does not necessarily contribute to absolute figures it will give an indication of trends in performance when deliverables, scale of operations and number of sites might change at a future date and as a result have an impact, negative or positive, on the amount of energy used. The effectiveness of the actions taken to reduce energy consumption can only be assessed with suitable data.

6.2.1 Waste Management

All organisations generate waste resulting from the delivery of their functions and services. Some of the key waste streams generated within Connect Health includes:

Consumables used in patient support and service delivery. This includes some clinical wastes (dressings, PPE etc) as well as general wastes such as paper, plastics etc. This includes 'sharps'.

The majority of waste in clinical settings is collected at the point of creation and disposed of by the local facilities management/ landlord. As Connect does not arrange for collection of waste for all sites and as such access to accurate waste data is difficult.

Waste is collected at 'P1' sites and managed by Connect and collected via appointed waste contractors for appropriate disposal. Some of this waste is segregated for recycling.

Waste generation represents a loss of resource – materials taken from the environment, used and no longer available. There is an environmental impact associated with the sourcing of raw materials, the manufacture and distribution of items and the effect from disposal (landfill) or reprocessing. It is advantageous to make every attempt to minimize environmental impact by considering the waste hierarchy. The waste hierarchy is used to determine both the legal framework for waste management (with an emphasis now on reduction and recycling) and to deliver reduced environmental impact within organisations.

WASTE HIERARCHY



The avoidance of waste generation is the most preferred route to minimising impact – this means seeking ways of using less materials or making products and items last for longer so that the amount of associated waste is reduced. For example, the removal of single use plastic cups, replaced reusable beakers that can be used instead.

If it is possible to reuse items, then this is the next preferred route – including undertaking repair so that the lifespan of something can be extended.

Recycling means that wastes are processed in some way so that they can be made into a new substance or product. This means that the waste must undergo some kind of industrial process that will, itself, have an environmental impact. A good example of this is glass that is re-melted to make new containers. Composting waste food or plant matter is also considered recycling.

Using waste to generate heat or energy (recovery) is preferable to disposal, but can have significant impacts if the waste is in any way hazardous. The least desirable means of dealing with waste is to dispose to landfill or incinerate without any kind of energy recovery.

Some waste streams (plastics in particular) have a more impactful change on the environment. Currently around 20% of our waste is plastic and recycling rates (even if they are segregated for recycling) are poor in some areas and for some types of polymers.



6.2.2 Measuring Waste Generation

Only waste that is generated within P1 sites (those within which Connect Health have responsibility for waste management) can be measured. Waste contractors employed must by law provide evidence of waste collected and disposed of and the nature of the disposal route. This will allow collation of waste data across these locations.

Information from waste contractors is used for making improvements in waste management and develop a clear understanding of waste streams and the effectiveness of any local waste segregation. Simply, the aims of this Sustainability Plan will be to increase the proportion of waste being processed towards the more desirable end of the waste hierarchy, along with an aim of reducing total wastes generated (a reflection of waste prevention).

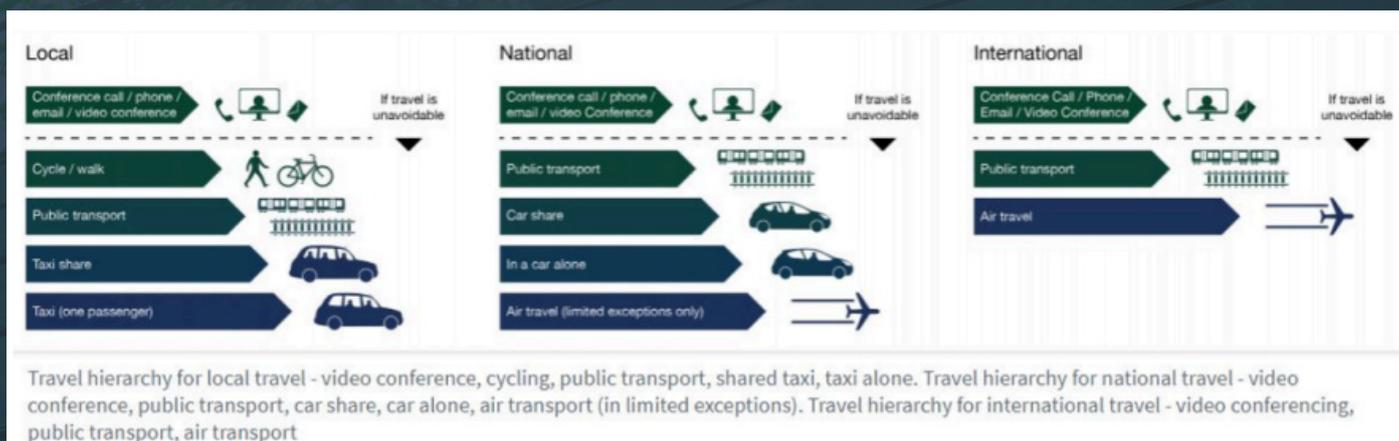
In developing the waste action plan, the following are the key principles:

- Establishing ratio of waste managed against each of the elements of the waste hierarchy (from disposal through to prevention) as a starting point.
- To introduce actions to both reduce total waste generated and to also develop mechanisms that move waste towards the more desirable end of the hierarchy.
- To work with clients and landlords to influence wider waste management decisions.
- To link in with wider NHS England aim to minimise single use plastics and other items (without compromising patient safety)

6.3.1 Travel and Transport

The necessity for employees across all functions to travel is part of our standard business activities, in order to ensure delivery of patient care. Despite the development of some virtual and on-line services during the COVID-19 pandemic face-to-face work will continue to be our primary means of delivering patient services.

Travel is unavoidable. In order to mitigate the effects of this, an electric car purchase and a cycle to work scheme have been introduced to enable employees to undertake their journeys in a more sustainable way. Hybrid and electric vehicles are also available via our car hire company. Employees are also encourage to use the travel hierarchy when planning any journey.



6.3.2 Travel and Environmental Impact

Travel generates direct and indirect carbon emissions, either from use of internal combustion engines in cars/buses or from use of public transport options such as train. Environmental impact is associated with these emissions, such as CO₂, particulates and Nitrous oxide and these can also have a damaging effect on health as well as the environment.

The means of travel will have an impact on the potential environmental impact, with each mode having a measurable effect. Travel, and car use in particular, accounts for a significant part of the environmental footprint of Connect Health.

Some simple measures can have significant impact on environmental effect. Changing the mode of travel, from a car to a bus, for example can reduce CO₂ emissions by over 40%. Care must be taken that by moving to a new mode the benefits are not lost on arrival, for example, travelling by train to a location and taking a taxi for a very short journey at the end.

It is recognised that travel mode and operational effectiveness tie closely together and that public transport options are not always compatible with meeting service delivery requirements. However, where practical, these other options need to be considered and need to be encouraged if possible.

6.3.3 Measuring Travel and Environmental Impact

Currently mileage and expenses claims provide a route to gathering data on the potential environmental impact of this activity. All journeys that are not home-to-office (regular commute) are claimable. This will hide some data on regular commute journeys.

Data provided by out travel and car hire partners is also used to calculation emissions and to aid in the identification of trends to form the basis of future travel policies and emission reductions schemes.



6.4 Procurement

Connect Health has in place the following key processes that affect what is purchased and if environmental considerations are considered:

- Supplier on-boarding process – that seeks to establish some environmental consideration in the selection and approval of suppliers of goods and services.
- Supplier on-boarding documentation – suppliers are asked to provide a wide range of information prior to awarding any contract or rights to supply. These questions include some element of sustainability.
- Procurement Policy – which outlines some key requirements reflected in the onboarding processes but also asks for consideration of environmental impact when making purchasing decisions.

Deciding on which companies can supply and requiring them to consider environmental performance can have a positive effect on the outcome within Connect Health. This primarily a means to influence suppliers and can filter improvement along the procurement chain. For example:

Asking suppliers to supply goods that have improved environmental performance, for example:

- Procuring equipment that may be energy efficient,
 - Goods that may be made from recycled content or be designed for easy recycling.
 - That minimise packaging or offer packaging that is easy to recycle
 - That use less plastics or other items that are more difficult to dispose of
- Consider delivery frequency and storage – to minimise the environmental impact of distribution (avoid delivery of small quantities and try to combine several items together into a single delivery)

To affect such processes and to begin the reduction in the impact associated with the goods we buy, our procurement policies will change to influence both our decisions and the activities of those who supply us.

7. Colleague Engagement

The majority of actions and improvements we seek to introduce rely heavily upon the commitment and engagement of our colleagues. Much of what we seek to do requires everyone to make decisions that improve our environmental performance. For example, employees using public transport instead of a private car where possible.

Whilst some element of what we wish to achieve is set out in this document, suggestions and ideas from all colleagues is encouraged and it is from our employees that many ideas may come. For this reason we will engage with colleagues to meet both the requirements of this plan and to also seek support and new ideas to further improve what we do in the future.

This plan commits the company to establishing the following:

- Implement a mechanism for suggestions from all colleagues.
- That the company will ensure that there are regular communications regarding environmental initiatives and that progress against our key environmental objectives are publicised.
- Introduce 'E-Learning' packages to raise awareness of key environmental issues - recording when these have been completed.
- Consider events or activities to demonstrate environmental commitment that can engage with staff, their dependents and the wider communities within which we operate.

8. Ensuring Compliance

Our environmental policy commits Connect Health to compliance against all relevant environmental regulatory requirements. To demonstrate that compliance is achieved we are committed to undertaking an evaluation of arrangements to meet regulatory requirements on an annual basis. In addition to this, we will work towards ISO 14001:2015 certification to provide external oversight of the environmental management system and provide reassurance of its effectiveness.

9. Measuring Success and Next Steps

The objectives and targets have been set and communicated to all interested parties (including staff and clients) and progress against them monitored. As part of employee engagement, progress on objectives will be communicated to all personnel. To support the objectives an overarching action plan is in place to provide the foundations that are required to achieve these target and objectives.

Setting objectives helps to drive improvement within the organisation; it provides the impetus for change and forces all personnel to be aware of progress (or lack of progress). When setting objectives, it is necessary to consider the following:

- That they are realistic and achievable.
- That a time frame is set for their completion.
- That a person or persons is allocated responsibility for the achievement of any particular target.
- That resources are allocated towards objective completion and necessary action plans and activities take place to deliver the required outcome.
- That progress against them is monitored and actions taken should progress be slow or stalled.