

## NHS Kent and Medway's drive towards a greener future

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1. It is estimated that the activities of the NHS contribute to approximately 5% of the total UK's carbon emissions<sup>1</sup>: greater than the annual emissions created by flight departures from Heathrow airport. If healthcare were a country, it would be the 5<sup>th</sup> largest emitter of greenhouse gases on the planet. The NHS therefore has both a moral, social and legal obligation to address the impact of human-induced climate change by supporting the delivery of the [17 UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).
- 1.2. [The Health and Care Act 2022](#) places a legal duty on the health and care organisations to tackle climate change. In October 2020, the NHS published its '[Delivering a Net-Zero NHS](#)' report, which set out a clear target of how it intends to reach net zero for its carbon emissions by 2040 and carbon footprint plus by 2045. The report is now statutory guidance and sets out the significance in scale and pace needed to achieve this ambition.
- 1.3. Two milestones were stipulated for all NHS organisations:
  - Reach net zero by 2040 for the emissions we control directly (carbon footprint), with an ambition to reach an 80% reduction by 2028 to 2032; and
  - Reach net zero by 2045 for the emissions we can influence (carbon footprint plus), with an ambition to reach an 80% reduction by 2036 to 2039.

### 2. Sustainability in Kent and Medway

- 2.1. In July 2022, NHS Kent and Medway published its first [Green Plan](#) and we set about developing a small team to begin our environmental sustainability journey. The recruitment of a dedicated programme lead has provided the impetus and exposure that this huge agenda requires across the system. Over the past 2-years, we have made significant and tangible progress.
- 2.2. NHS Kent and Medway has built a strong reputation at a regional and national level for being leaders and innovators, always striving to improve the health and wellbeing of our patients, staff and our planet. We have achieved this because we are passionate about the NHS, about making a positive difference for future generations and about protecting our vulnerable ecosystems.
- 2.3. Our team has received national recognition and awards across a broad range of sustainability topics including for Training and Development, Clean Air, Medicines Management, Staff Engagement and Behaviour Change, Standardised Carbon Emissions Calculating and reporting, and Research and Innovation.
  - NHS Kent and Medway has recently been shortlisted for/won several **Sustainability Awards** relating to training, leadership and inhaler recycling with celebrated wins in the categories of 'Sustainability Hero', 'Finance' and 'Carbon Emission Calculating'.

- We are the first Integrated Care System in the country to take a system-wide approach to calculating and monitoring NHS carbon emissions.
- Re-Hale inhaler recycling project, a collaboration between NHS Kent and Medway and East Kent Hospital Foundation Trust was promoted at **The European Association of Hospital Pharmacists** in Bordeaux.
- The ICB Lead Medicines Optimisation Pharmacist received the Green Award at the **2024 NHSE South East Nursing and Midwifery Week** for their work on reducing emissions associated with inhalers.
- The Programme Lead hosted an on-line webinar in March 2024 to 34 sustainability leads from other Integrated Care Systems, providers and NHS England, leading to national interest in the Sustainability Board training. The training was recently delivered to Norfolk and Norwich Trust Board members who highly recommended it on national social media platforms.
- The **KM Greenredeem** sustainable workforce behaviour change platform has been promoted at a national level within the NHS and other Trusts are engaged in discussions about purchasing the platform. The Programme Lead is supporting the developers in creating content that is relevant to clinical practice, such as reducing waste, active travel, sustainable medicines, clinical pathways and avoiding single-use plastics.
- At the recent **Canterbury Christchurch University Nursing Conference** key note speakers raised awareness of sustainability research in healthcare and inspired students to consider future research projects focussing on sustainability.

2.4. Our successes have been achieved because we have strived to work more closely with our partners, as an Integrated Care System, committed to building strong and respectful relationships and working collaboratively to deliver positive change. We have identified several important motivational factors, other than climate change, that support the case for change: improved public health; efficiencies in the way we work; financial savings; forging stronger alliances with partners; and a profound sense of pride in our healthcare service, communities and natural habitat.

2.5. **Our vision is to work with our partners to ensure that sustainability is at the heart of everything we do, providing first class patient care in the most sustainably conscious way.** Not just by choosing greener but by using less, repurposing what we use, and avoiding waste. There are clear health and wellbeing benefits to reducing carbon emissions, improving air quality, and doing everything we can to manage the impacts of accelerated climate change. We are committed to continuing to work hard to minimise our environmental impact and promote sustainable practices across the system.

### 3. Progress so far

3.1. In the last two years, since the publication of our Green Plan in July 2022, the following achievements have been made:

#### **Estates, Waste and Energy:**

- £30m in Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) funding received towards decarbonising our estates infrastructure.
- Secured over £1m of funding for LED lighting, reaching 76% coverage across 3 Trust sites.
- NHSE overseeing single contract for energy – all Kent and Medway Trusts are engaged.
- All plans for new estates developments include Environmental Impact Assessments. For new buildings, we insist on them meeting the BREEAM 'Excellent' standard as a minimum.
- Several of our NHS Trusts are taking part in a national food waste project.
- An adaptation strategy is under development in partnership with KCC, Medway Council, Primary Care, NHS Property Services and universities to ensure the estate and infrastructure is resilient to climate changes already being experienced in the region, such as extreme heat, flooding and drought. The approach is using the national Local Climate Adaptation Toolkit (LCAT): [Local Climate Adaptation Tool \(lcat.uk\)](https://www.localclimateadaptation.org.uk/)
- One ICB office switched to sustainable energy provider, making significant financial savings, the remaining offices are following suite as contracts expire.
- Improved recycling facilities in all ICB offices and living walls have been installed at all offices. An indoor green space has been created at Gail House, Maidstone.

#### **Medicines and Medical Equipment:**

- On-going reduction in the prescribing of MDI inhalers across all four of the Kent and Medway Health and Care Partnerships (HCP's). 75 GP practice reviews now complete. 3,700 patients reviewed, 2,500 stopped salbutamol inhalers, an increase from 27% to 73% of patients using Dry Powder Inhalers (low carbon footprint) rather than Metered Dose Inhalers (high carbon footprint). 45% reduction in Ventolin prescribing has resulted in estimated carbon footprint savings of 730 tonnes of greenhouse gases (equivalent to 730 hot air balloons).
- £36,000 worth of community equipment (walking aids, etc) returned for reuse. East Kent Trust has avoided having to purchase new crutches since the project began.
- Re-Hale inhaler recycling pilot launched in September 2023. After the first six months the project has proven to be the most successful inhaler recycling scheme in the UK. 71 sites across East Kent signed up to receive used inhalers with more coming on-board. To date, over 20,000 used inhalers collected, left-over gases and medicine residues safely captured, and materials recycled. If 10% of all inhalers prescribed in East Kent are recycled it would reduce our greenhouse gas emissions by 19 tonnes (equivalent to 19 hot air balloons).

- Consultant-led audit of Nitrous Oxide (NO<sup>2</sup>) waste carried out at all Acute Trust sites and recommendations made to decommission manifolds, repair damaged pipes, removing access to NO<sup>2</sup> in some clinical areas and switching off demand valves when not in use. NO<sup>2</sup> is 300 times more potent than carbon dioxide in causing global warming and remains in the atmosphere for 121 years.

#### **Research and Innovation:**

- Research is being undertaken and promoted through the Kent and Medway Sustainability in Healthcare and Research Network (KMSHARe) with several bids for funding submitted in collaboration with local NHS, research organisations and universities. The outcome of a system-wide bid for £5m over 6-years to host a research hub for exploring the health impacts of healthy diets is impending.
- Implemented an innovative and new approach to carbon emissions reporting and monitoring, using a system-wide approach across all ICS NHS Partners.
- Implemented a pilot of hemp fabric surgical caps across 4 local Trusts. This is the first-time hemp fabric has been used as an alternative to disposable and cotton fabric in the UK healthcare system and delivers financial savings over the lifetime of the re-usable caps. Several Trusts from other parts of the country have expressed an interest in purchasing the hemp caps and the project has been promoted by NHSE colleagues at a national level.
- Kent and Medway Pathology team have been successful in securing SBRI funding to pilot the use of drone technology to reduce transport emissions, reduce costs and improve patient care in the diagnostic pathway.
- Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Trust has carried out an assessment of expired medicines and equipment and estimated up to £0.5m can be saved through smarter ordering processes and avoiding stock-piling.

#### **Primary Care:**

- Roll out of the Green Impact for Healthcare Toolkit across Primary Care and roadmap to net zero. One practice has achieved the Gold Standard Award which means they have implemented significant steps to reduce their carbon emissions and impact on the environment which also delivers better patient and staff experience.
- 'Gloves Off' Campaign raising awareness of the appropriate use of disposable gloves and Infection Prevention and Control support for when glove use is not necessary.
- Sustainability training has been delivered to GP Registrars at Maidstone Post-Graduate Centre.

#### **Travel and Transport:**

- Promoting public resources for active travel working in partnership with KCC and Medway Council.
- National NHSE lead for green travel and transport appointed to develop the Kent and Medway Travel and Transport Delivery Group in the short-term to fill the gap

of a local lead until an appropriate representative from local authority can be agreed.

- A multi-agency Sustainable Travel and Transport Workshop taking place on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024, bringing together LA, Public Health, NHS and public transport providers to identify challenges and opportunities for reducing emissions across Kent and Medway.

#### **Supply Chain:**

- A roadmap to sustainable procurement has been implemented by NHSE Green Team resulting in a mandatory requirement for all NHS contracts to have either a Carbon Reduction Plan or a Commitment to Net Zero. All ICB procurement processes include a 10% Social Value weighting and bidder responses are assessed by the Programme Lead.
- Addressing modern slavery in the NHS supply chain is a top priority for the NHS South East Regional Sustainable Procurement Group following a recently published government report which highlighted suppliers at high-risk of child exploitation, forced labour, physical and mental harm and workforce inequalities, particularly in Pakistan and Malaysia.

#### **Training and Development:**

- Kent and Medway Medical School training on Sustainability in Healthcare launched.
- Sustainability education delivered to all Primary Care training hubs involving over 600 members of the workforce and a stakeholder workshop identified key primary care priorities and membership for a delivery group.
- Board-level sustainability training delivered to 13 members of the ICB Board resulting a significant change in mindset at the most senior level of the organisation leading to system prioritisation of the Green Plan and additional resources in the form of Executive Director leadership of the delivery groups. This Board training is now being taken up on a national level.
- Our Programme Lead has completed the NHS Leadership Academy training on Leadership in Sustainability within healthcare systems. This also provided the opportunity to build networks with colleagues across the country and share good practice.
- Two members of the ICB's Quality team have completed Centre for Sustainable Healthcare SusQI training which strives to deliver the best possible health outcomes with minimum financial and environmental costs, while adding positive social value at every opportunity.

#### **Staff Engagement:**

- In January 2023, the ICB launched mandatory staff training on ESR for 'Delivering a Net Zero NHS' and set a compliance target of 80% which we have achieved.
- Green Ambassadors Network established with over 50 ICB members from a broad range of departments and bandings. The Network meets quarterly, and members are getting involved in various projects such as green spaces, business intelligence, inhaler switch/recycling, promoting awareness days. A group of

Green Ambassadors walked the equivalent of a marathon on 20<sup>th</sup> June (Clean Air Day) to raise awareness and funds for Asthma and Lung UK and Kent Wildlife Trust. The group raised almost £3,000 for these two charities.

- A digital platform has been trialled for 12-months to engage the ICB workforce in sustained behaviour change. KMGreenredeem uses gamification and nudge theory to engage staff and encourage support for the ambitions of the Green Plan by providing bite-sized information in formats such as videos, quizzes and pledges. Monthly campaigns focus on topic specific issues with content updated each week. Activities are incentivised by a points system which allows subscribers to donate to charity, win prizes, save money on sustainable shopping or achieve the coveted spot at the top of the leader's board. There are nearly 200 staff subscribed, almost 3,000 actions have been taken which have saved 2,500 KG of carbon emissions (1KG of carbon is equivalent to the size of a football).
- Promotion of organisational approach for delivering sustainable and ethical events and team meetings including sourcing free venues; providing healthy lunch option; reducing waste; voluntary donations to local food banks; utilising digital technology; minimising travel; access to public transport; and avoiding single-use plastics.

#### 4. NHS Kent and Medway's plans moving forward

- 4.1. We are the first Integrated Care System in the country to take a system-wide approach to calculating and monitoring NHS carbon emissions. Using a methodology developed in partnership between NHS Kent and Medway and Kent Community Healthcare Foundation Trust, we now have a standardised calculation of carbon emissions across six of our major NHS Trusts and the ICB. This methodology received national recognition and was highly commended at the 2023 Academic Health Science Network Awards. Many other NHS organisations are now looking our way for examples of good practice in achieving sustainable healthcare.
- 4.2. Kent and Medway's NHS Trusts' Sustainability Leads and NHS England South East Regional Green Team analysed the outputs of the carbon emissions footprint reports with the aim of identifying a small number of high-impact priority areas. The group concluded that around 80% of the NHS's current carbon emissions in Kent and Medway can be attributed to the following 4 areas:
  - **Energy** (71% of reported carbon footprint emissions) - in particular, energy relating to estates and infrastructure (electricity, fossil fuels). Delivering a net zero health service will require work to ensure new hospitals and buildings are net zero compatible. For the existing estate a wide range of interventions including air conditioning and cooling, insulation, building fabric, LED lighting, space and water heating and ventilation could all be rolled out to further reduce carbon emissions, but these require significant investment to achieve. Our NHS Trusts have secured over £30m of national funding to help decarbonise their estate and we are making great progress with switching to LED lighting and utilising solar energy.
  - **Medicines** (12.5% of reported carbon footprint emissions) – including medical equipment, medical devices and waste. Medicines account for 25% of total NHS carbon emissions when primary care is considered. A small number of medicines account for a substantial proportion of these emissions, particularly

anaesthetic gases and nitrous oxide which account for around 2% of NHS emissions, and inhalers which account for around 3%. Significant progress is being made in identifying and targeting waste and reducing carbon emissions through medicines management.

- **Waste** (10% of reported carbon footprint emissions) - attributed to clinical, hazardous, general landfill, recycling and re-use. The NHS currently produces an estimated 156,000 tonnes of clinical waste every year just from secondary care; equivalent to 100,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e (it is helpful to note that 1 tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>e is equivalent to 1 hot air balloon). The South East NHS Total Waste Management (TWM) Consortium has recently undertaken a procurement on behalf of the Trust for the provision of sustainable healthcare waste management and minimisation services. The procurement process was conducted by East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust (EKHUFT) on behalf of the Consortium. The new contract will have the following benefits;
    - Expected efficiency savings over the contract over the years.
    - Zero waste to landfill assisting the NHS to reduce its environmental impacts.
    - Partnership working and sharing of best practice between organisations and contractor.
    - Net Zero commitments at the heart of the contract
  - **Travel and Transport** (6% of reported carbon footprint emissions) – includes business travel, staff commuting, NHS fleet and leased vehicles, freight transport and accommodation. The NHS has the second largest fleet in the country and contributes 10 billion miles per year to road travel and 560,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e from business travel and staff commuting alone. Currently, the NHS has very little influence over the infrastructure for travel and transport but there are valuable opportunities for system partners to work more closely together on areas such as EV charging, active travel, air pollution and access to public transport.
- 4.3. The standardised carbon emission reporting tool has helped us identify the key areas that we need to focus on as a system to reduce our carbon emissions. Each of the NHS Trusts' existing green plans align with these four emissions categories and each Trust is working to deliver carbon reductions for these areas.
- 4.4. This set of shared priorities will help us to maximise our combined efforts and focus on the areas that have the greatest impact. We have established a process for gathering robust data, enabling us to monitor carbon reductions and track our progress, providing us with a sound foundation on which to build our ambitions towards reaching net zero. All Trusts and the ICB have a carbon footprint report which identifies baseline emissions, and they report progress against a set trajectory on a quarterly basis to the ICS Environmental Sustainability Steering Group.

#### Primary Care

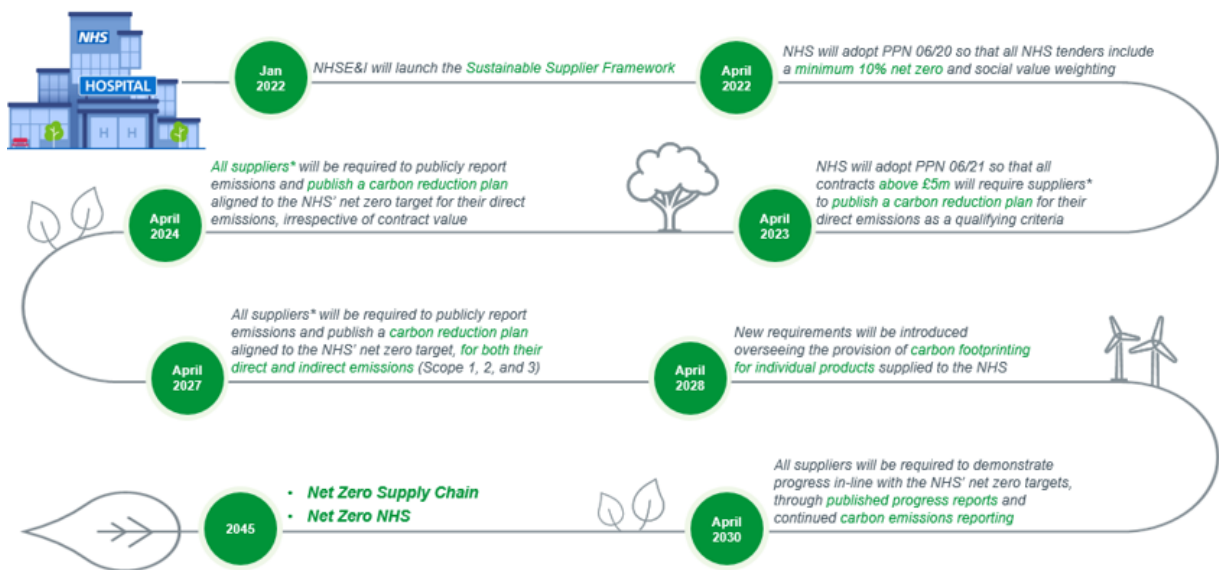
- 4.5. Primary Care contributes 25% of total NHS emissions (5 million tonnes a year) and pharmaceuticals including GP prescriptions equating to over 3.5 million tonnes a year.

Work is underway by the ICB to coordinate and facilitate collaborative working with Health Care Providers (HCP) and Primary Care Networks (PCN) on the NHS net zero ambitions as well as identifying individual practices where pockets of excellence in innovation and behaviour change are taking place with a view to building an evidence base of what works and opportunities to up-scale. All general practices are being encouraged to sign up to the free on-line Green Impact for Healthcare Toolkit which identifies actions that can help reduce emissions and awards a scale of accreditation as practices implement the changes. We have one practice in Kent which has already achieved a Gold Standard and we intend to support many more over the coming months.

- 4.6. NHS Kent and Medway has recently secured a Sustainability Clinical Fellow for a 12-month period, starting in September 2024, through national funding. The Clinical Fellow will lead on the Kent and Medway roll out of the Green Impact for Healthcare Toolkit across Primary Care, supporting GP Practices towards their net zero targets.

## 5. What is NHS Kent and Medway doing in relation to procurement and sourcing of lower carbon intensive products and services?

- 5.1. NHS England has stipulated a roadmap to sustainable procurement by 2045, which all Trusts across NHS Kent and Medway are working towards.



- 5.2. NHS Trust procurement teams are working together, led by the ICB Chief Finance Officer, to purchase goods and services that deliver value for money whilst having minimal environmental impact throughout their lifecycle, including promoting a circular economy on products that can be re-used and re-purposed. This approach considers the triple bottom line as applied to healthcare to improve sustainability and social value:

$$\text{Value} = \frac{\text{Outcomes for patients and populations}}{\text{Environmental + social + financial impacts (the 'triple bottom line')}}$$



- 5.3. All plastic cutlery, take-away packaging, straws and polystyrene cups have already been removed from the supply chain following a national ban.
- 5.4. Maidstone and Tonbridge Wells NHS Trust are using NHS England's product opportunity dashboard / Futures-NHS buying guides to implement more sustainable product switches. Procurement colleagues are working with the Strategy Team to build sustainability and social value into business cases and creating an environmental and sustainability impact assessment.

## **6. NHS supply chain**

- 6.1. The NHS operates a complex and extensive supply chain to ensure that healthcare services are delivered effectively and efficiently. The supply chain management within the NHS involves a multi-faceted approach that includes supplier selection, procurement processes, sustainability considerations, and an emphasis on utilising local suppliers wherever possible.
- 6.2. The NHS often uses framework agreements, which are pre-negotiated contracts with suppliers that provide a range of goods and services. Suppliers are chosen through competitive tendering processes, ensuring compliance with public procurement regulations. These processes emphasise quality, cost-effectiveness, and reliability.
- 6.3. NHS organisations use electronic procurement systems to streamline the purchasing process, reduce administrative costs, and improve transparency. These systems enable Trusts to place orders, track deliveries, and manage inventories efficiently.
- 6.4. All suppliers are required to demonstrate their sustainability credentials, to demonstrate what they are doing to reduce carbon footprints, using eco-friendly materials, and minimising waste. Trusts collaborate with suppliers to develop innovative solutions that enhance sustainability, such as energy-efficient medical devices and recyclable packaging.
- 6.5. NHS Trusts are encouraged to use local suppliers wherever possible to support local economies and reduce the environmental impact associated with long-distance transportation. Local procurement policies focus on sourcing goods and services from within the region, provided they meet the required standards and are cost-effective. Local examples include setting up local, weekly fruit and vegetable stalls at Maidstone and Tonbridge Wells NHS Trust's sites, sourcing of locally sourced food for the restaurants and using local construction companies to deliver major capital developments projects such as the Community Diagnostic Centre programme.
- 6.6. In East Kent, East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust, together with their delivery partner 2gether Support Solutions, are actively exploring how to best support local suppliers within the context of national legislation. As appropriate, this support is projected to include promoting contract opportunities through local sources and facilitating the upskilling of suppliers around NHS procurement and administration processes.

**7. Summary information from our NHS Provider Trusts about what they are doing to reduce waste generated through their clinical activities.**

|                | <b>Examples of what Trusts are doing to reduce clinical waste</b>   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>MTW</b>     | Clinical Waste Project: avoiding over-ordering and enhancing circular economy. Reducing single-use plastic cups.<br>Rationing/removing items from surgical packs.   |
| <b>KMPT</b>    | Optimised segregation of waste.<br>Reducing waste volume by 5% per year.<br>Moving towards circular economy. Avoiding buying new.<br>Monitoring stock management. Streamlining product lines. Regular waste audits.   |
| <b>EKHUFT</b>  | New waste management contract commences in 2024.<br>Waste care group sharing best-practice and identifying opportunities for waste reduction and cost-efficiencies.   |
| <b>MFT</b>     | Regular stock management audits.<br>Streamlining product lines<br>Reducing waste and improving recycling  |
| <b>KM Wide</b> | All acute providers trialling re-usable surgical caps made from hemp fabric - this is an NHS first.<br><br>'Re-Hale' inhaler recycling project launched in East Kent and looking to roll-out across Kent and Medway.<br><br>Community Equipment Recycling Project in East Kent to be rolled out across Kent and Medway.<br><br>National 'Gloves Off' campaign being promoted across primary care and providers. |

**8. What the NHS in Kent and Medway is doing to help reduce patient travel through the use of virtual appointments?**

- 8.1. Face-to-face clinical appointments will always be a vital part of providing quality clinical care, and there will be a clinical need and personal patient choice to consider alongside the need to reduce physical appointments. However, as part of its strategy to help fulfil the [NHS Long Term Plan](#) commitment to reducing physical face-to-face appointments, NHS Kent and Medway has adopted video to deliver some outpatient consultations. Video consultations enable patients to remain at home or at work for their consultation. They also facilitate remote working for clinicians.
- 8.2. Video or telephone consultations minimise physical attendances, protecting patients, staff and the community, and as such were particularly important during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. They also allow clinicians who needed to self-isolate or to shield as a result of COVID-19, to safely continue with their patients' appointments, avoiding the need to cancel these appointments.

- 8.3. These remote or virtual consultations also reduce the cost of attending hospital appointments for patients and their carers / families, including the cost of travel, car parking, childcare and time off work. They also improve patient satisfaction and convenience, increase remote working for clinicians, and reduce carbon emissions from travelling to appointments.

### Primary Care

- 8.4. During 2023/24, 32% of GP appointments were offered virtually.
- 8.5. NHS Kent and Medway have been running Remote Consultation and Triage Training for 2-years. This is complimented by a series of safer consulting webinars on a variety of subjects.

### Secondary Care

- 8.6. Since April 2022, there has been a national target that 25% of outpatient appointments are virtual. This includes consultant led, nurse led and allied health profession led (physiotherapists for example).
- 8.7. Virtual appointments can be done via the telephone to discuss simple test results or via full video conferencing, and all appointments and outcomes are done through the Trusts' PAS system; an example of this would be virtual fracture clinic.
- 8.8. Each provider is responsible for ensuring full training is given on their virtual consultation equipment.
- 8.9. The table below provides information about Kent & Medway's performance against the national virtual outpatient target. This shows that performance is consistently above the target.

|  | 2324 - 01 | 2324 - 02 | 2324 - 03 | 2324 - 04 | 2324 - 05 | 2324 - 06 | 2324 - 07 | 2324 - 08 | 2324 - 09 | 2324 - 10 | 2324 - 11 | 2324 - 12 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Total Virtual Attendances                | 48,111    | 49,445    | 49,751    | 54,144    | 52,239    | 56,732    | 55,106    | 48,091    | 47,168    | 57,063    | 52,554    | 51,208    |
| Target (25% of all OP)                   | 40,640    | 47,304    | 49,977    | 47,608    | 47,069    | 46,732    | 48,003    | 52,575    | 41,970    | 52,708    | 48,628    | 49,759    |
| Total Outpatient                         | 162,561   | 189,217   | 199,906   | 190,433   | 188,275   | 186,929   | 192,013   | 210,299   | 167,881   | 210,830   | 194,511   | 194,323   |
| Virtual Target Plan (25% of planned OP)* | 38,868    | 43,863    | 41,953    | 44,264    | 44,622    | 43,702    | 45,596    | 46,219    | 40,007    | 45,557    | 43,506    | 44,246    |
| Outpatient Plan                          | 155,470   | 175,451   | 167,812   | 177,054   | 178,489   | 174,806   | 182,382   | 184,874   | 160,028   | 182,228   | 174,023   | 176,982   |
| Performance                              | 29.6%     | 26.1%     | 24.9%     | 28.4%     | 27.7%     | 30.3%     | 28.7%     | 22.9%     | 28.1%     | 27.1%     | 27.0%     | 26.4%     |

## **9. Adaptation**

- 9.1. Climate change adaptation is necessary to address resource shortages and extreme weather events, which could compromise the NHS's ability to deliver care in the future, compounding the negative impacts of climate change on public health.
- 9.2. The Kent and Medway Resilience Forum produces a Community Risk Register that has assessed the risk of extreme weather events to Kent and Medway as very high (coastal flooding), high (flooding) and medium (heatwave and drought). As temperatures increase the likelihood of extreme weather events affecting the county increases.
- 9.3. Current and future assets - schools, care homes, healthcare facilities, highways, and community buildings among others - must be made resilient so that they can continue to perform as our climate changes without jeopardising service demand and delivery. So too must the range of services that KCC provides, especially those for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged sectors of society who will be disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change. Our work with partners also needs to

embrace this adaption challenge, and where KCC works in partnership with others (for example to promote environmental improvements, economic development and the health and wellbeing of Kent's residents and communities), there is an opportunity to encourage climate adaptation more widely across the county.

- 9.4. The NHS programme of work relating to emergency preparedness, resilience and response (EPRR) plays a crucial role in planning and responding to the increasing impacts of climate change by risk assessing, resilience building, adapting infrastructure and systems; and responding to incidents. EPRR involves collaboration with local authorities, emergency services, and other stakeholders to develop integrated response plans. This ensures a coordinated approach to managing climate-related risks and enhances community resilience. EPRR frameworks incorporate public health strategies to mitigate the effects of climate change. This includes preparing for increases in climate-sensitive health issues such as extreme weather-related illnesses, respiratory conditions, and vector-borne diseases. Recent local examples include responding to the water outages over the past 18 months, increasing incidents of heatwaves affecting vulnerable people, and supporting response to localised flooding.
- 9.5. A system-wide approach to adaptation is critical for building climate resilience across the county whilst ensuring that adaptation measures are agreed beyond sector-owned assets and support initiatives which involve communities in planning and implementing. Collaboration on adaptation must be a dynamic and ongoing process that requires the continuous engagement of all stakeholders, innovative thinking, and a commitment to sustainable development principles. Leaders across Kent and Medway Health and Care must articulate a clear and compelling vision for a resilient future. Only by integrating strategic planning, inclusive governance, resource mobilisation, capacity building, and adaptive management, system leaders can effectively guide adaptation efforts at scale that protect communities and ecosystems, ensuring a sustainable future for all.

## **10. Summary**

- 10.1. The Kent and Medway Greener NHS Programme has made lots of celebrated achievements over the past year, but there is still so much more to do to reach our net zero targets and ensure we make sustained improvements in cost-savings, patient pathways and outcomes, public health and the wellbeing of our workforce. What has been achieved so far has only been possible through the sheer determination and perseverance of everyone involved, often as an addition to the day job and without additional funding. The workforce has demonstrated an unwavering and passionate commitment to reducing the impact of healthcare services on the environment and reversing the effects of climate change. However, only limited impact can be achieved with current resources and capacity, particularly in the area of estates and medicines, which generate the greatest proportion of carbon emissions.
- 10.2. There are only four years remaining before we need to have met the net zero target for emissions we directly control. Achieving this target will require closer system-wide collaboration across all partners within the Kent and Medway health and care system and a significantly greater investment in our estate to ensure it is not only sustainable but also fit-for-future purpose.

10.3. Sustainability and climate-adaptation (meaning to adjust to the changes already taking place) are key to NHS Kent and Medway being able to commission world-class healthcare, both now and in the future. NHS Kent and Medway is committed to ensuring it creates and embeds sustainable models of care and delivery throughout the services it commissions and ensuring its own operations and estate are working towards local, national and global ambitions to address the greatest challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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<sup>i</sup> Health care's response to climate change: a carbon footprint assessment of the NHS in England (2021).  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196\(20\)30271-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2542-5196(20)30271-0)