

Creating the Conditions for Change – National Health Service Sustainable Development Unit (NHS SDU) for England

GGHH Agenda Goal: Leadership

Health System Goals:

- **The NHS to be a leading low carbon and sustainable health system**
- **10% reduction in CO₂e emissions for NHS England by 2015 (2007 baseline)**

Progress Achieved:

- In 2010 the NHS England carbon footprint stopped rising
- Projections (see graph) anticipate a 5.4% (1 MtCO₂e) decrease in the NHS carbon footprint by 2015. A further cut of 4.6% is needed to reduce emissions by 10% by 2015
- A 1.9% drop in carbon emissions from building energy use (2007/12) despite an increase in activity of 11.4%. This is a direct energy saving worth around £10 million.
- 4 out of 5 NHS organisations have a Sustainable Development Management Plan (SDMP) annually approved by the Board
- 81% of NHS organisations included at least a short statement on sustainability in their annual report
- 53% of NHS organisations have signed up to the Good Corporate Citizenship tool
- 31% of NHS organisations include sustainability in staff job descriptions and 37% run energy awareness events



The Issue: The business case for health systems to lead the way writes itself when you consider:

- the Climate Change Act's (2008) legally binding carbon reduction targets for the UK;
- the well documented detrimental health impacts of climate change;
- the positive health impacts of reducing carbon emissions and lower carbon lifestyles;
- the financial benefits of using resources more efficiently;
- the projected increase in demand for health services;
- and the increased supply chain resilience from reducing reliance on increasingly expensive commodities.

Sustainability Strategy Implemented

- Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) established in 2008 to provide system leadership (i.e. vision and strategy), convene and catalyse action through regional networks and measure monitor and report system progress.
- In 2008, first entire health system carbon footprint published and consultation carried out with the system on developing a NHS Carbon Reduction Strategy (CRS) for England.
- CRS published in 2009

- Route Map for Sustainable Health – A strategic framework for action developed with over 70 organisations to align and co-ordinate health system sustainable development action published in 2011.

Implementation process

- A thorough consultation process led to responses from 66% of NHS organisations - a strong mandate for action. This mandate has been strengthened by ongoing engagement with NHS leaders and the public. The engagement process also highlighted the strategy needed to focus on practical actions and activities that support health care professionals and managers to do their job better – it must be integrated into core business.
- Ten regional sustainability networks provide; invaluable support to SD managers and champions; a forum for sharing innovation and ideas; a dialogue between the national tier and the organisations delivering care; galvanized action; a whole systems approach; and identification of implementation barriers.
- The Route Map for Sustainable Health (see graphic) was a success because a robust workshop process was designed and the route map emerged from it. The SDU did not go to the system with a ready-made solution and ask “what do you think?” Health system clinicians and managers are problem solvers – bring them together and trust in the process to develop a jointly created solution.



Tracking Progress - The sustainability of the NHS is formally measured by:

- Overall carbon footprint for NHS England
- Regional energy, waste and water usage reduction maps
- Percentage of organisations with board approved Sustainable Development Management Plans (SDMPs)

Challenges and lessons learned - “Well done is better than well said!” [Benjamin Franklin]

- Have a vision, strategy and a strong mandate for action
- Complex systems create natural silos – the strength of a national team is to convene, alert, test and catalyze action across these silos
- Leaders need to ask, listen, understand, rearticulate the win wins and take exemplary action
- Be positive and align change with other drivers in the health system (e.g. integrated care, more self care, better use of ICT)
- Measurement, monitoring and transparent reporting are crucial
- Reframe messages constantly to help different audiences find their entry point (e.g. money, ethics, reputation, legal and regulatory compliance)
- Build sustainability into existing governance processes

Next Steps

- Between Jan 2013 and May 2013 the SDU is conducting a consultation and engagement exercise for the next sustainable development strategy that builds on progress made in the NHS Carbon Reduction Strategy.
- This consultation document and the other documents mentioned above can be accessed from the NHS SDU website (www.sdu.nsh.uk)

Demographic Information

This case study relates to the NHS in England which serves the health needs of its population of 62 Million people. It is free at the point of use and offers universal coverage. As such it is composed of primary, secondary and tertiary services which cover all geographical areas. The service employs 1.4 Million staff.

INTERNAL:

Main contact person information: James Mackenzie

Email: james.mackenzie@sdu.nhs.uk

Telephone n°: 00 44 (0) 1223 596963

Quotes:

"We see the medical profession as playing a potentially highly influential role in spearheading a movement towards carbon reduction and sustainable development. Doctors are highly regarded by the public, professionals and policymakers, and their collective voice can make a considerable impact."

[Academy of Medical Royal Colleges]

"There is a lot more to do than is currently being done on the ground today. I often turn off lights and computers in offices at night and feel there is a lot of potential for improvement."

[Karen Badcock, Portering Team Leader
Outpatients Department

Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust]

"All contractors and suppliers should be required to reduce their carbon footprint."

[Dr Jon Orrell,
General Practitioner,
NHS Dorset]

"The NHS has a caring culture. What better way to support that culture than by supporting sustainability and so protect both the patients of today and the citizens of tomorrow."

[Professor Martin Roland
Chair in Health Services Research
University of Cambridge]

"All Trusts should recognise the need to consider the environmental impact of their business activities and be committed to ensuring sustainability and environmental management are an essential part of our health care."

[Claire Murdoch
Chief Executive]

Central and North West London
NHS Foundation Trust]

Please, list all contacts named in this case study:

NHS Sustainable Development Unit – www.sdu.nhs.uk

Team biographies: <http://www.sdu.nhs.uk/about-sdu/who-we-are/meet-the-team.aspx>

Contact us: <http://www.sdu.nhs.uk/about-sdu/contact-us.aspx>

Keywords / topics: Sustainable development, leadership, monitoring and measuring, systems thinking