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NHS Chairs
NHS Chief Executives
via email

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Dear Colleagues

A POLICY FOR NHS SCOTLAND ON THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - DL (2021) 38

I am writing to share with you the attached policy statement, a '**Policy for NHS Scotland on the Global Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development**'.

This policy statement supersedes CEL 2 (2012) 'A Policy on Sustainable Development for NHSScotland 2012'.

Addressees should ensure that this letter is cascaded to all appropriate staff within their area of responsibility.

The attached document has been prepared in consultation with Health Boards and relevant Scottish Government and public sector stakeholders. It takes account of relevant wider Scottish Government policies and existing statutory duties on Health Boards.

The policy sets out aims and associated targets for NHS Scotland to work towards. The forthcoming NHS Scotland Climate Emergency and Sustainability Strategy will provide proposals for action to assist in meeting those aims and targets.

The Policy for NHS Scotland on the Global Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development takes immediate effect.

Responding to the climate emergency is one of the Scottish Government's highest priorities and I look forward to working with you on this crucial matter.

Yours sincerely

Richard McCallum
Director of Health Finance and Governance



A Policy for NHS Scotland on the Global Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development

Introduction

Responding to the global climate emergency is one of the Scottish Government's highest priorities. Sustainable development, the concept that the needs of the present must be met "without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"¹ is integral to the Scottish Government's overall purpose. The Scottish Government's National Performance Framework shares the same aims as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework for NHS Scotland to maximise its contribution to mitigating and limiting the effects of the global climate emergency and for the development of an environmentally and socially sustainable health service that is resilient to the locked-in impacts of climate change. **As such, the policy is mandatory for all NHS Scotland bodies and its scope extends to all of their activities.**

The aims of this policy must be fully integrated into all planning, management decisions and operational practices across NHS Scotland in order to respond fully to the global climate emergency and achieve an environmentally and socially sustainable health service.

Background

The planet is in the midst of a climate emergency as a result of human activity and urgent action is required to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, adapt to the changes caused by climate change and achieve an environmentally and socially sustainable society.

Climate change presents a serious risk to the health of people around the world and has been described by the Lancet Commission on Managing the Health Effects of Climate Change as "*the biggest global health threat of the 21 century*"².

At the same time, many of the actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change and improve environmental sustainability also have positive health benefits to such an extent that the Lancet Commission has described tackling climate change as "*the greatest global health opportunity of the 21st century*".³ It is therefore incumbent on NHS Scotland to be an exemplar in responding to the climate emergency and achieving environmental sustainability.

Meeting the needs of the present requires action to address the inequalities in our society, inequalities which manifest themselves in significantly poorer health outcomes for the most deprived. Many of the health benefits of action to address the climate emergency and ecological crisis will have the greatest benefits for those with the worst health outcomes.

¹ Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future (1987) ("the Brundtland Report") Para. 27.

² Reference

³ The Lancet Commission on Managing the Health Effects of Climate Change (2015) – complete reference

Policy Aims

- Ensure that NHS Scotland bodies, as an integral part of their commitment to the health and wellbeing of the community, contribute to the achievement of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.
- Ensure that NHS Scotland becomes a net-zero greenhouse gas emissions health service by 2040 or earlier where possible.
- Ensure that NHS Scotland's assets and activities are resilient to the impacts of a changing climate, particularly extreme weather events.
- Establish a culture of stewardship within NHS Scotland, where natural resources are safeguarded and responsibly used to provide environmentally sustainable healthcare.
- Establish NHS Scotland as part of the circular economy through designing out waste and pollution, keeping products and materials in use and contributing to the regeneration of natural systems.
- Increase NHS Scotland's contribution to tackling the ecological emergency and restoring biodiversity.

Governance

1. Each NHS Scotland body must implement a strong management structure as a means of ensuring the delivery of this policy's aims. Each NHS Scotland body must either establish a Climate Emergency and Sustainability Group or designate an existing committee as the lead group for climate emergency and sustainability. In either case, the group must be chaired by a member of its senior / executive management team and its membership must be of sufficient authority to ensure that the aims of this policy are fully integrated into all planning, management decisions and operational practices across the NHS Scotland body.
2. The Scottish Government Health and Social Care Directorates (SGHSC) have established an NHS Scotland Climate Emergency and Sustainability Board to provide leadership and governance to NHS Scotland's overall efforts in responding to the global climate emergency and achieving an environmentally and socially sustainable health service.
3. Each NHS Scotland body must appoint an executive lead for its climate emergency response and sustainability.
4. Each NHS Scotland body must appoint a member of its board to act as champion for its climate emergency response and sustainability at a strategic level to assist in articulating and promoting its sustainability priorities.
5. Each NHS Scotland body Chief Executive is accountable to the SGHSC for their organisation's implementation of this policy.
6. NHS Scotland bodies which encounter issues with or barriers to the implementation of this policy or its aims which cannot be resolved at NHS Scotland body level must escalate those issues to the NHS Scotland Climate Emergency and Sustainability Board.
7. As assessment of its progress against the aims of this policy will form part of each NHS Scotland body's annual ministerial review.

Integrated approach and co-operation

8. NHS Scotland bodies must take an integrated approach to the achievement of the aims of this policy. In developing plans or taking action, NHS Scotland bodies must consider the full range of this policies' aims.
9. NHS Scotland bodies must co-operate with each other with a view to achieving the aims of this policy.
10. The achievement of this policy's aims will require NHS Scotland bodies to work with their local communities and patients and with organisations outside of the NHS who have similar aims or who can assist NHS Scotland to achieve its aims. In particular, territorial Health Boards are required to use all reasonable efforts to work with the local authorities for their areas to achieve this policy's aims.

A Just Transition

11. In implementing this policy, NHS Scotland bodies must:
 - a) plan, invest and implement a transition to an environmentally and socially sustainable, climate resilient, health service in a way which builds on Scotland's economic and workforce strengths and potential;
 - b) create opportunities to develop resource efficient and sustainable approaches which help address inequality and poverty; and
 - c) design and deliver low carbon and climate resilient investment and infrastructure, making all possible efforts to create decent, fair and high value work.

Net-zero

Scope 1 and 2 emissions

12. Having regard to national plans to decarbonise the UK's electricity supply by 2035, each NHS Scotland body must reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from its activities, the activities under its control and from the electricity, steam and heat purchased by it to net-zero by 2040 or earlier where possible. The UK's independent, statutory Climate Change Committee advises that most sectors will need to reduce emissions close to zero without offsetting.
13. All NHS owned buildings must be heated from renewable sources by 2038 or earlier where possible.

Scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions

14. NHS Scotland bodies must, as a minimum, reduce their associated greenhouse gas emissions from the following sources to net-zero by 2040 or earlier where possible:
 - energy transmission and distribution, having regard to national plans to decarbonise the UK's electricity supply by 2035
 - waste disposal
 - business travel, including grey fleet

- water consumption
- waste water treatment
- leased assets

15. Each NHS Scotland body must take sufficient action to influence a reduction in those greenhouse gas emissions which are linked to its activities but are from sources which it does not own or control (and are not included in paragraph 14) to maximise its contribution to reducing emissions to net-zero by 2045 or earlier where possible.

Interim targets

16. Where the 1990 baseline is known for an emissions source, the NHS Scotland body must reduce the emissions from that source by at least 75% by 2030.

17. Where the 1990 baseline is not known for an emissions source, the NHS Scotland body must set interim targets for reducing emissions from that source which are consistent with achieving the net-zero target for the emissions type.

Greenhouse gas emissions reporting

18. Each NHS Scotland body must assess their progress towards net-zero emissions via their annual Public Bodies' Climate Change Duties Report which is to be submitted to the Scottish Government by 30 November each year. NHS Scotland bodies should, as a minimum, report on their annual emissions associated with their:

- building fossil-fuel energy use
- owned and leased fleet fuel use
- fluorinated gases and anaesthetic gases (where relevant)
- purchased energy use (electricity, heat, steam)
- energy transmission and distribution
- waste
- water consumption
- waste water treatment
- business travel, including the use of grey fleet
- leased assets

Climate change adaptation

19. Each NHS Scotland body must undertake a Climate Change Risk Assessment covering all operational areas and produce and implement a Climate Change Adaptation Plan to ensure resilience of service under changing climate conditions and these should be reviewed and updated at least every 5 years.

20. In relation to existing facilities, these assessments and plans should cover a period at least 20 years into the future from the time of assessment.

21. In relation to planned facilities, these assessments and plans should cover a period at least 50 years into the future from the time of assessment.

22. The key risks from the Climate Change Risk Assessment must be incorporated into each NHS Scotland body's corporate risk register.

23. Progress on undertaking Risk Assessments and implementing Adaptation Plans, including in terms of how these are supporting national Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programmes, is to be set out in each bodies' annual Public Bodies' Climate Change Duties Report.

Sustainable care

24. Each NHS Scotland body will foster and promote a culture of stewardship, where staff are mindful of the resources they use and share a vision of green and sustainable healthcare.

25. Each NHS Scotland body must ensure their workforce consider the environmental impacts of treatments when making decisions about the care they provide.

26. Each NHS Scotland body will ensure all employees are educated and trained on the principles of practising sustainably.

Procurement

27. Each NHS Scotland body must consider social and environmental sustainability when it is procuring goods and services. The procurement of goods and services by NHS Scotland bodies must further the aims of this policy.

28. NHS Scotland bodies are reminded of the sustainable procurement duty established by section 9 of the Procurement (Scotland) Act 2014, which can be viewed here: [Procurement Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/12/section/9). NHS Scotland bodies are required to follow the guidance and use the tools issued by the Scottish Government to assist in optimising the economic, social and environmental outcomes of their procurement activity.

29. It is the responsibility of each NHS Scotland body to review the supply chain of the goods and services that it procures to determine the extent of the associated greenhouse gas emissions and social and environmental impacts. Where an NHS Scotland body procures goods and services on behalf of another organisation, it is the responsibility of the procuring body to review the supply chain.

Circular economy

30. Each NHS Scotland body must contribute to the creation of a circular economy, working with National Procurement and with suppliers to design out waste and consider the entire life cycle of products and services, reducing the environmental impact, keeping products and materials in use and contributing to the regeneration of natural systems.

31. In particular, NHS Scotland bodies must:

- promote the use of items and assets which have been designed for durability and upgradability;
- prolong the use of items and assets through proper maintenance and promoting their reuse; and
- promote the use of items and assets which can be recycled at the end of their useful life.

32. NHS Scotland bodies, with support from National Procurement, must identify and assess the life cycle of products and services and take action to reduce their environmental impact through the avoidance of pollution (including toxic chemicals, micro-plastics and pharmaceutical residues) and waste throughout their life cycle.

Water

33. Each NHS Scotland body must monitor its water usage and take action to reduce unnecessary water consumption.

Resource and Waste Management

34. Each NHS Scotland body must put in place a system for recording and reporting the volume and type of waste which it generates and the destination of that waste.

Targets

35. By 2025, each NHS Scotland body must:

- a) reduce its domestic waste arising by a minimum of 15%, and greater where possible, compared to a financial year 2012/13 baseline;
- b) ensure that no more than 5%, and less where possible, of all its domestic waste goes to landfill;
- c) reduce the food waste it produces by 33% against a financial year 2015/16 baseline; and
- d) ensure that 70% of all its domestic waste is recycled or composted.

36. Each NHS Scotland body must set appropriate targets for reducing the volume of healthcare waste it produces through measures including greater use of reusable items, improvements to waste segregation and increased recycling of recyclable materials.

Biodiversity and Greenspace

37. Under section 1 of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, it is the duty of each NHS Scotland body in exercising its functions to further the conservation of biodiversity so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions. In addition to that duty, each NHS Scotland body must promote improvements to biodiversity in so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of its functions.

38. All NHS Scotland bodies must assess, and then take action to improve:

- a) the extent and quality of the greenspace they have;
- b) the contribution its estate makes to biodiversity; and
- c) the value of the ecosystem services its greenspaces provide.

39. Greenspace can have benefits for the health and wellbeing of staff, patients and communities. NHS Scotland bodies must manage their greenspace to increase its provision and improve access, quality and regular use by staff, patients and the local community.

40. Greenspace can have benefits in relation to climate change mitigation and adaptation through, for example, reducing flooding and absorbing heat. NHS Scotland bodies

must manage their greenspace to assist with climate change mitigation and adaptation.

41. All NHS Scotland bodies must collaborate with local partners to improve the natural links between NHS greenspace and other local areas of greenspace.
42. Where an NHS Scotland body proposes an action which would result in the loss in quantity or quality of greenspace to the NHS or its contribution to biodiversity, it must refer the proposal to the SGHSC.
43. It is the duty, under section 2A of the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004, of each NHS Scotland body to publish a report every three years on the actions taken by it in pursuance of its duty under section 1 of that Act during the period to which the report relates. These reports must be forwarded to SGHSC when they are published.

Travel and transport

44. All NHS Scotland bodies must take action to reduce the carbon emissions resulting from travel associated with their activities, including those associated with staff and patient travel. Those actions must include:
 - Actions to reduce the need for travel;
 - Actions to increase active travel;
 - Actions to increase the use of public or community transport to access services and sites;
 - Actions to reduce car use in support of the Scottish Government's aim to reduce the number of kilometres driven in Scotland by 20% by 2030 compared to a 2019 baseline; and
 - Actions to support the use of vehicles powered by renewable energy in preference to vehicles powered by fossil fuels.
45. The actions set out in the paragraph above must be taken in a way which supports access to services with a particular focus on addressing inequality of access.
46. Each NHS Scotland body must remove all petrol and diesel fuelled cars from their owned and leased fleets by 2025 or earlier where possible.
47. Each NHS Scotland body must phase out the need for it to purchase or lease any petrol or diesel light commercial vehicles by 2025 or earlier where possible.
48. Each NHS Scotland body must phase out the need for it to purchase or lease any petrol and diesel vehicles by 2030 or earlier where possible.
49. Each NHS Scotland body must decarbonise its owned and leased fleet by 2032 or earlier if possible.
50. Each NHS Scotland body will develop a sustainable transport and travel policy.

Facilities

51. All NHS Scotland bodies must take sufficient action to ensure that the buildings they own or occupy achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040 or earlier if possible. The UK's independent, statutory Climate Change Committee advises that

most sectors will need to reduce emissions close to zero without offsetting. Therefore, the public sector's owned estate needs to achieve as close as possible to absolute zero direct emissions.

52. All NHS Scotland new buildings and major refurbishments must be designed to have net-zero greenhouse emissions. Where a net-zero design is not currently practicable, the project must only be approved where a credible route map showing how net-zero emissions will be achieved before 2040 is produced.
53. In addition, all NHS Scotland owned buildings must be heated from renewable sources by 2038. All NHS Scotland new buildings must be designed to achieve that target. Where a renewable heat source is not currently practicable, the project must only be approved where a credible route map showing how renewable heating will be achieved before 2038 is produced.
54. All NHS Scotland buildings should be assessed for resilience to the locked in impacts of climate change over the expected lifespan of that building. Where resilience is not considered sufficient, an action plan must be set out to improve this.
55. Each NHS Scotland body's Property and Asset Management Strategy must support the achievement of this policy's aims and in particular the requirements to reduce carbon emissions, adapt to the changing climate and promote greenspace and biodiversity.

Environmental Management Systems

56. Each NHS Scotland body must implement the following management standards to further the aims of this policy: ISO 9001 and 14001 or equivalent. NHS Scotland bodies are not required to seek external confirmation or certification of its conformance with these standards.
57. Each NHS Scotland body must have an effective Environmental Management System in place which has been approved by the SGHSC.

Resourcing

58. Each NHS Scotland body must have a Climate Emergency and Sustainability Team which is sufficiently resourced in light of the scale and complexity of the challenge of decarbonisation, sustainability and climate resilience faced by that NHS Scotland body.
59. Each NHS Scotland body must appoint an Environmental Management Representative (EMR) with the responsibility, resources and authority to implement this policy in respect of environmental management.
60. Each NHS Scotland body must appoint a Waste Management Officer with the responsibility, resources and authority to implement this policy in respect of waste. The Waste Management Officer must have responsibility for all aspects of waste management within the organisation consistent with the Scottish Government's commitments towards zero-waste and a circular economy.
61. Each NHS Scotland body must appoint an officer with the responsibility, resources and authority to implement this policy in respect of greenspace and biodiversity.

62. Each NHS Scotland body must appoint an officer with the responsibility, resources and authority to implement this policy in respect of travel.
63. Each NHS Scotland body which provides clinical services must include a sustainable care medical planning team as part of its Climate Emergency and Sustainability Team.

Assessment of Sustainability

64. Each NHS Scotland body must assess its contribution to the achievement of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals on an annual basis using the National Sustainability Assessment Tool provided by NHS National Services Scotland.

Awareness and Reporting

65. Each NHS Scotland body must publish a report on its public website by November each year summarising its progress against the aims of this policy using a template approved by the SGHSC for that purpose. The progress report must be approved by the NHS Scotland body's Chief Executive and be provided to:

- The NHS Scotland body's staff
- The NHS Scotland body's board members; and
- SGHSC.

66. The annual progress report will form part of each NHS Scotland's body annual ministerial review.

67. Each NHS Scotland body must have a clear communications plan to ensure that staff, patients and the local community are aware of that NHS Scotland body's climate emergency and sustainability plans, policies and processes, and to support them to make sustainable choices. The communications plan must include measures to publicise the annual progress report.

Review

68. This policy and its implementation will be reviewed annually by the NHS Scotland Climate Emergency and Sustainability Board.