



# A Partnership Approach to Supporting a NET Zero NHS



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On 1 July 2022, the NHS became the first health system to embed net zero into legislation, through the Health and Care Act 2022.<sup>1</sup> This places responsibilities on NHS England, and all trusts, foundation trusts, and integrated care boards to contribute towards statutory emissions and environmental targets.

NHS Trusts and integrated care boards (ICBs) will meet this new requirement through the delivery of their localised Green Plans, which sets out their aims, objectives, and delivery plans for carbon reduction. This plan is approved by the Trust Board, with a board-level 'net zero lead' responsible for overseeing its delivery.

Local Trust Green Plans support the Greener NHS programme's ambitions set out in 'Delivering a 'Net Zero' National Health Service'.<sup>2</sup> The vision being "To deliver the world's first net zero health service and respond to climate change, improving health now and for future generations" with two clear targets, to be net zero by 2040 for the emissions the NHS controls directly and by 2045 for the emissions they can influence.



Newcastle Hospitals NHS Trust have consistently been ahead of the game when it comes to fighting climate change, being the first healthcare organisation in the world to declare a climate emergency back in June 2019 and committing to achieve net zero carbon by 2040, ahead of NHS England's target.

Increasing recycling is a simple task that healthcare staff can undertake to make positive contributions to reducing carbon emissions and conserving natural resources by reducing demand for raw materials.

Nutricia's parent company Danone is a founding member of the UK Plastics Pact led by Wrap (The Waste and Resources Action Programme). This initiative brings together businesses and non-governmental organisations from across the entire plastics value chain with UK governments to tackle plastic waste. The focus is on creating a circular economy for plastics, capturing their value by keeping them in the economy and out of the natural environment.

When the Nutrition and Dietetics team at Newcastle upon Tyne approached Nutricia to work in collaboration on a recycling project, it was an ideal opportunity to work in partnership to meet both organisations' objectives along with the Greener NHS ambition.

## Improving recycling of medical nutrition packaging in Newcastle

Across primary and secondary care in Newcastle upon Tyne, approximately half a million units of medical nutrition products in plastic packaging are used every year. Although this packaging is recyclable, it was suspected that in practice not everything was being recycled. In order to address this, we first needed to understand staff and patients' attitudes to recycling and identify any barriers in accessing recycling facilities.

In January 2021, Dietitians, Dietetic Support Workers, Nurses and a Waste Manager joined representatives from Nutricia (the contracted enteral feed company in Newcastle), and formed a collaborative working group, conducting baseline surveys to understand current levels of recycling practice and to measure the potential impact of future interventions.

Two workstreams were established: primary care (care homes and home tube feeding patients) and secondary care (selected wards, using a significant amount of medical nutrition in 2 large acute hospitals).

A combination of online surveys and nurse led one to one questionnaires (to patients at home) were used to gather baseline data on current recycling practices.

## Results

In primary care, 28 home enterally tube fed patients across the city responded to the questionnaire, half reporting that they recycle 50% or more of their packaging, however the other half recycling none or very little. When asked "What would make you recycle more?" 43% replied more or clearer information on what could be recycled.

In secondary care, 104 staff responded from adult and paediatric wards, three quarters were nurses and although the majority regularly recycled at work (95%), only 63% knew what medical nutrition packaging could be recycled. When asked what prevented them from recycling more: poor awareness, time and lack of recycling facilities were the most common answers, and everyone who responded wanted more information.

Unfortunately, the survey response from Care Homes was poor, due to numerous factors including COVID-19 pandemic pressures. However, limited recycling facilities were highlighted from the Care Homes who did respond. Addressing this and supporting recycling in Care Homes will be a key focus for the next stage of this project in 2023.



## Education

Following the baseline surveys, a programme of education was undertaken across primary and secondary care. This was launched during UK Recycle Week in September 2021.

The communication highlighted the aim of the project, information on the recyclability of medical nutrition packaging and instructions on how to recycle appropriately. The information was promoted by healthcare professionals across all settings, through team meetings, newsletters, ward posters and patient leaflets.

The sustainability team at Newcastle Hospitals NHS Trust also provided extra recycling bins where limited facilities had been highlighted as an issue.

A BAPEN abstract was accepted and published in March 2022,<sup>3</sup> and the project was submitted for a CAHPO (Chief Allied Health Professions Officer) Award and a Trust sustainability award earlier this year.

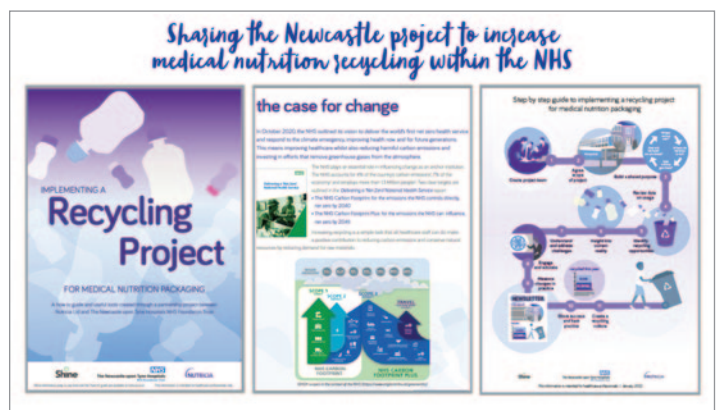
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The surveys will be repeated in Autumn/Winter 2022 to measure the success of the education programme and next steps will be agreed after these results have been analysed. A specific focus on improving recycling practices within Care Homes and patients at home has already been identified as a 2023 project.

## Resources available

One of the main achievements from this project is the creation of a number of resources which other NHS Trusts can use to implement similar projects to maximise recycling practices and support their Trusts local Green Plans, these include:

- A step-by-step guide 'How to implement a recycling project for medical nutritional packaging'
- Example online survey questions
- Template ward posters
- Recycling information for patients
- Template presentation for healthcare professionals.



All these resources are proving popular with nearly 350 healthcare professionals viewing this information in the last 6 months and 165 individual items downloaded.

All the resources and templates can be downloaded at [nutricia.co.uk](http://nutricia.co.uk), for easy access just scan the QR code.



The NHS has a dual purpose, to improve healthcare whilst reducing harmful carbon emissions and investing in efforts that remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. Nutricia, as a certified B Corporation company is committed to work in partnership with suppliers, customers and patients and share resources and insights to drive broader change. It is hoped that this project will inspire others to consider what steps they can take to increase the recycling of medical nutrition packaging in their Trusts to support a net zero NHS.

The authors would be interested in connecting with other healthcare professionals who have initiated similar recycling initiatives to fight climate change to further share examples of best practice.

