



RCGP  
Environmental  
Sustainability Policy

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## The climate emergency is a health emergency

'[Fair and Sustainable Healthcare](#)' is a strategic priority for the College within the Council Strategic Plan 2026-2029, following a three-year strategic priority to 'respond to the climate emergency' in 2023-2026.

In demonstrating leadership, RCGP recognises the inextricable link between human and planetary health, with environmental sustainability being integral to high-quality patient care, health equity and the resilience of general practice.

This policy provides clarity about the key areas the College commits to, to enhance environmental sustainability.

This policy applies to staff, volunteers/advocates, suppliers, and partners.

# Purpose and scope

In line with the NHS, RCGP is committed to reach net zero carbon emissions by:

2040 for areas we directly control

by 2045 for areas within our influence

Areas we directly control include: heating/power generation within our properties; electricity; business travel; waste; water.

Areas we influence include: goods and services; staff commuting

**Net Zero Targets**

# Principles

## Carbon hierarchy

Actions which address avoiding carbon-intensive activities will be prioritised. Offsetting is at the bottom of the hierarchy and would only be used as a last resort.

## Evidence-Based

Being guided by the latest science and health research.

## Inclusive and Equitable

Contextualising and addressing the link between enhancing environmental sustainability and health equity.

## Member-focused

Actions taken on environmental sustainability will be in line with our role to support members to maintain the highest standards of patient care.

We will draw upon the expertise of our members, such as through the Planetary Health Strategy and Delivery Oversight Group.

## Delivering co-benefits

Actions to enhance environmental sustainability, including reducing emissions and building resilience to climate change can deliver multiple benefits, including for GP's and patients, such as improving air quality, reducing workload or providing cost-savings.

The policy objectives are grouped based upon the three levels that the College is enhancing and enabling environmental sustainability:

1. Supporting GPs and practices to improve their environmental sustainability and reduce emissions
2. Lobbying governments and decision-makers to deliver change
3. Embedding environmental sustainability across RCGP

Policy objectives



Continue to ensure that references to [planetary health and environmental sustainability](#) within the GP Curriculum remain accurate, proportionate, and aligned with the best available evidence



Provide resources, tools and expert support to embed sustainability in general practice via the [Net Zero Hub](#) and Primary Care Development



Engage with members through the Faculty network, such as through events, webinars, communications channels and via Climate and Sustainability Leads, fostering grassroots momentum

## Supporting GPs and practices to improve their environmental sustainability and reduce emissions



Advocating for green investment for General Practices



RCGP is a founding member of the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change ([UKHACC](#)) and aligns with their 12 commitments



Champion evidence-based approaches to greener prescribing

Lobbying governments  
and decision-makers to  
deliver system-level  
change



**Waste reduction:** Prevent waste at source, prioritise reuse, and ensure maximum recycling across properties and at events and meetings



**Energy efficiency:** Monitor energy use and implement energy-saving measures across properties, events and digital infrastructure



**Sustainable travel:** Air travel should be avoided in favour of rail where practicable. Walking, cycling or public transport are encouraged.



**Sustainable procurement:** Apply sustainability criteria in supplier selection and contract management (where applicable)



**Plants-first catering:** Prioritise the provision of vegetables, legumes, fruits, nuts and wholegrains as standard at meetings and events

## Embedding environmental sustainability across RCGP

- The **Sustainability Lead** coordinates overall delivery of core environmental sustainability initiatives
- The **Planetary Health Strategy and Delivery Oversight Group**, consisting of departmental representatives across the College, members of the RCGP National Faculty Climate and Sustainability Group and Greener Practice, meet quarterly to discuss progress, offer expert advice and scrutiny of the College's approach to environmental sustainability.

## Governance and accountability

## RCGP will:

- Review and update this live policy as required.
- Consider where environmental sustainability can be further embedded across directorates.
- Set measurable targets, and key performance indicators.
- Continue to measure Scope 1 and 2 emissions, alongside expanding the number of scope 3 emissions categories that are measured, investing in data systems and measurement tools to better track and reduce emissions across scopes.
- Report annually on carbon emissions and progress on sustainability within RCGP's annual report and accounts.
- Comply with and report annually through Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR).

# Monitoring, evaluation and reporting