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## Executive summary July 2022

Climate change is a global health emergency. The health sector is both part of the problem, due to its high carbon footprint, but also part of the solution, as an advocate for change.

The UK and its institutions are leading the world in taking action to mitigate the health impacts of climate change. Hospitals around the country are finding innovative ways to reduce waste, control emissions, use greener forms of transport, and ensure supply chains have as low an environmental impact as possible.

**A webinar organised by BMJ, in partnership with the Asian Development Bank, UK Government and the NHS explored the role of the health sector in climate change and what lessons could be learned from the UK.**

**NHS**



**UK Government**

The webinar was well attended with 247 participants from 55 countries.

## Five key messages came out of the webinar:

### 1. Good leadership is vital

The NHS was the world's first health system to commit to becoming carbon net zero, inspiring 20 countries to follow suit. For the first time, all 212 NHS trusts in England must have a green plan in place setting out their own roadmaps to tackle climate change. Newcastle Hospitals is an example of one trust that has demonstrated strong leadership through its climate emergency executive oversight group and SHINE (Sustainable Healthcare in Newcastle) which established a clear identity and direction.



***“Just providing the information is not simply enough; we need to know how those messages are getting across so that people adopt them and adapt their behaviour accordingly.”***

Paul Davison

### 2. Declare a climate emergency

In 2019, Newcastle Hospitals became the first healthcare organisation in the world to publicly declare a climate emergency. This formal acknowledgement that the climate crisis is a health crisis helps focus public attention on the issue. It means the hospital trust is committed to fast-tracking reductions in carbon emissions and will work collaboratively with civic partners across the city. Advocacy is important with a number of healthcare organisations following Newcastle's example and also declaring a climate emergency.

### 3. Share learning

Sharing learning on strategies to mitigate climate change - whether through national institutions, individual hospitals or simply one person talking to another - can have a big impact. Individual hospitals can inspire others by sharing their sustainable healthcare solutions. Newcastle Hospitals, for example, has led the way in a number of areas including using reusable sharps boxes and trialling climate-friendly pain relief during labour. While there is much to learn from the UK there is also the opportunity to learn from low and middle-income countries that have direct experience of coping with extreme high temperatures and disasters such as typhoons and flooding. The NHS and the World Health Organization are currently setting up a team to support other countries to reach their own commitments around net zero through shared learning.



#### 4. Harness collective power

The NHS employs 1.4 million people and 9 in 10 staff support a net zero NHS. When such a large number of people come together they can make a real difference – through the choices they make on food, travel, energy use and waste. One way that Newcastle Hospitals encourage staff members to make sustainable changes is by providing subsidies for sustainable travel and rewarding staff through a Shine Rewards app. The trust has also set up clinical sustainability fellowships for clinicians and nurses and, crucially, provided them with 50% protected time to work on sustainability projects.



***“What we saw during the pandemic was 1.4 million members of staff collectively coming together to really make a difference. The challenge now is how to harness that power but over a longer period of time.”***

Laura Wilkes



***“The area of waste continues to be challenging particularly with the large quantities of single use plastic used during the pandemic. We need to dispose of less and reuse and recycle more.”***

James Dixon



#### 5. Bring suppliers with you on the journey

Procurement makes up a large part of the NHS’s carbon footprint with about 80 000 companies supplying everything from medicines to food. These suppliers are not directly under the control of the NHS but can be influenced by it. The NHS has worked hard to bring suppliers with them on their journey to net zero and have published a roadmap on how this will be achieved. By 2030 suppliers will only be able to qualify for NHS contracts if they can show they have decarbonised.



***“There is so much we can learn from each other. The effects of climate change are becoming familiar whether you live in the UK or in South East Asia.”***

Renzo Guinto