



Healthy Futures

Commissioning for sustainable development

‘Commissioners have an opportunity to reap the benefits that sustainable development can bring, helping to reduce inequalities, improve health and produce a more efficient and effective health system – all key priorities for World Class Commissioning.’

Gary Belfield, Acting Director General, Commissioning & System Management Directorate, Department of Health

NHS commissioners have huge power, and huge responsibility. Holding over 80% of the NHS budget, they make decisions that can have immediate and long-lasting consequences in the communities they serve.

Good corporate citizenship is the term used by the NHS to describe how NHS organisations can use their power and influence to embrace sustainable development – and by doing so achieve a wide range of benefits, including:

- Contributing to more effective commissioning
- Supporting the quality and productivity challenge
- Improving quality of care and making more efficient use of funds
- Making effective, strategic long term plans that improve health
- Producing positive outcomes for service users, the wider public and the environment
- Achieving good value for money for the tax payer
- Moving from treatment to prevention
- Addressing risks posed by energy insecurity, carbon costs and climate change
- Contributing to a healthy environment and a sustainable NHS

This publication is the ninth in a series looking at how the NHS can contribute to sustainable development. It is the first to focus on how sustainable development can become an integrated element of NHS core business.

What does good corporate citizenship mean?

Good corporate citizenship is an approach whereby positive health outcomes can be achieved and inequalities reduced, both in the short and long term, whilst minimising financial and environmental costs.

It means thinking about how to use the resources and influence of the NHS to maximise health, beyond clinical functions, and to contribute to the sustainability of the communities it serves.

It follows the principles of sustainable development set out in *Securing the Future*, the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (2005).

Living within environmental limits

Respecting the limits of the planet's environment, resources and biodiversity – to improve our environment and ensure that the natural resources needed for life are unimpaired and remain so for future generations.

Ensuring a strong, healthy and just society

Meeting the diverse needs of all people in existing and future communities, promoting personal wellbeing, social cohesion and inclusion, and creating equal opportunity.

Achieving a sustainable economy

Building a strong, stable and sustainable economy which provides prosperity and opportunities for all, and in which environmental and social costs fall on those who impose them (polluter pays), and efficient resource use is incentivised.

Using sound science responsibly

Ensuring policy is developed and implemented on the basis of strong scientific evidence, whilst taking into account scientific uncertainty (through the precautionary principle) as well as public attitudes and values.

Promoting good governance

Actively promoting effective, participative systems of governance in all levels of society – engaging people's creativity, energy and diversity.

What does this mean for commissioners?



The decisions commissioners take in relation to needs assessment, purchasing goods and services, managing

transport, commissioning building work, working with partners and influencing providers can make a huge difference to health and sustainability in the UK.

For commissioners, good corporate citizenship means:

- Taking a broad view of all of the determinants of health, including physical activity, employment, community cohesion and a healthy environment, and considering how they apply to individual commissioning decisions.
- Using the position and influence of the NHS to minimise carbon emissions, pollution, use of resources and waste.

- Considering whole life costs of goods and services, and linking health, wellbeing, the economy and the environment in decision making.

For example, by making commissioning decisions that encourage active travel, generate employment opportunities, strengthen local communities, and improve access to a healthy, safe environment, commissioners can help improve the health of local populations, tackle lifestyle diseases and inequalities, reduce carbon emissions and reduce costs.

Commissioners can also look for ways to work with providers, and design and deliver services, to minimise fuel consumption, energy use (which costs the NHS £410 million per year) and generation of waste (disposal of which costs the NHS £70 million per year).

'As the biggest public sector employer in the country, the NHS needs to lead by example. I want to encourage NHS staff to really get involved and do their bit to create a greener NHS.'

Sir David Nicholson KCB CBE, Chief Executive, NHS

'The NHS is committed to providing best value for taxpayers' money and the most effective, fair and sustainable use of finite resources.'

NHS Constitution

Case study

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON HOSPITAL Cutting carbon in the supply chain



UCLH has signed up to the 10:10 campaign – pledging to cut its carbon emissions by 10% in 2010.

They have reviewed their supply chain to plot the location of their suppliers, vehicles used, and frequency of deliveries. They are looking for innovative ways to join with other major hospitals to reduce journeys and make deliveries more efficiently. They have included sustainable development criteria in all tendering documents and are working with their top ten suppliers to find ways to become more sustainable.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE NHS?

- The NHS needs to find ways of improving the quality of care whilst making more efficient use of funds. A sustainable approach encourages greater efficiency, less waste, promotion of good health and prevention of illness.
- Climate change has been identified as the key threat to human health in the 21st century, and yet the NHS contributes more than 25% of public sector carbon emissions in England. The UK Government has a target to reduce UK carbon emissions by 80% by 2050 and the NHS response should be similarly ambitious.
- The NHS can act as a leader and make a big difference. The NHS has an annual budget of over £100 billion, 1.4 million employees and the largest property portfolio in Europe. It has huge influence through its operations, workforce, on its suppliers and in the communities it serves.

WORLD CLASS COMMISSIONING AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

World Class Commissioning (WCC) is about taking a more strategic, long term approach to commissioning, helping to reduce health inequalities and improve the life expectancy of the population. Applying the principles of sustainable development when making decisions can help commissioners achieve these goals and can form an integral part of delivery against the WCC competencies. For example:

Locally leading the NHS.

Sustainable approaches do not go unnoticed, and can help PCTs engage with their local community and build a positive reputation as a leader.

Working with community partners.

Working to achieve strong, healthy, sustainable communities involves collaborating with key partners in designing services.

Engaging with public and patients.

A sustainable approach to planning and decision making integrates the views of patients and other community residents, ensuring that the needs of local communities are met.

Managing knowledge and assessing needs.

Sustainable commissioning involves engaging closely with communities and understanding the wider determinants of health and whole life costs in decision making.

The World Class Commissioning assurance framework requires all PCTs to be assessed on their long term strategic planning, finance and board arrangements. Sustainable development is included in the panel guidance of the WCC assurance process, as an issue of key strategic importance that should be considered as part of the challenges and areas for development for PCTs.

By including sustainable development in the vision and goals of their strategic plans, PCTs can demonstrate that they are taking a long term view and looking for ways to increase their resilience to risk and uncertainty.

For example, climate change poses a risk to health in the UK by increasing the likelihood of flooding and heatwaves. PCTs can find sustainable ways to mitigate against this risk, e.g. by reducing carbon emissions in care pathways.

PCTs also need to demonstrate that they are responsive to a changing financial climate. Part of this involves thinking about ways to reduce waste and deliver services more efficiently and sustainably in the long term.

PCT Boards have a key role to play in developing a culture in their organisations in which sustainable development is embraced as a way of doing business.

Practice-based commissioning



Given their position and influence in local communities, primary care clinicians, such as GPs, nurses and pharmacists, have

a great opportunity to contribute to a more sustainable NHS. Daily contact with patients means local clinicians have a thorough understanding of patients' needs. They are also in a position to collaborate effectively with key local partners, including other clinicians, the voluntary sector and their local authority.

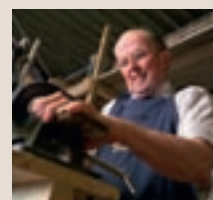
Through practice-based commissioning, PCTs can work in partnership with local clinicians to make best use of finite NHS funds and commission services drawing on this close understanding of local need. Practice-based commissioners can design care pathways that transfer care out of hospitals and into communities and patients' homes – improving the patient experience, and reducing travel, pollution and carbon emissions. They can also design and commission services that tackle the root causes of ill health, such as inactivity or unemployment.

'PCTs can play an important role in reducing the environmental impact of the NHS and making it more sustainable. This also makes good business sense – helping to produce efficiency savings and true value for money in the long term.'

Will Day, Chairman, Sustainable Development Commission

Case study

JAMES WIGG GP PRACTICE Tackling unemployment and mental health



The James Wigg GP Practice in North London found that long term unemployed patients often

presented with mental health problems such as depression. To address the root cause of this illness, the practice joined forces with Tomorrow's People, a charity specialising in breaking the cycle of unemployment. They set up an in-house counselling service to help patients build their confidence and get back to work. The service has produced excellent results, with a marked decrease in mental health problems, an average of five fewer GP consultations per referred patient per year, and fewer consultations from patients' families. Helping patients into employment has helped prevent ongoing illness, and reduced demand for further consultations and treatment with expensive, carbon-intensive drugs.

TAKING ACTION

Detail on practical actions commissioners can take to help make the NHS commissioning process more sustainable can be found in the NHS Sustainable Development Unit guide, *Commissioning for Sustainable Development: A How-To Guide for Commissioners* (www.sdu.nhs.uk/page.php?page_id=167).

Primary care trusts can make a good start by taking the following steps:

- Nominate a Board-level sustainable development champion to spearhead sustainable development in your organisation.
- Assess your organisation's progress using the NHS Good Corporate Citizenship Assessment Model (www.corporatecitizen.nhs.uk). This online resource includes a self-assessment test, case studies and useful resources.
- Formulate a Board-level Sustainable Development Management Plan, incorporating a carbon reduction plan, and produce an annual report on progress.
- Raise awareness and change behaviour through internal and external communication of your Sustainable Development Management Plan.

Reduce carbon emissions

By finding ways to reduce energy use, commissioners can help save the NHS money and at the same time, tackle its carbon footprint. *Saving Carbon, Improving Health: The NHS Carbon Reduction Strategy* (2009) sets out how the NHS carbon footprint is composed and how it can be reduced. The strategy states that the NHS should have a target of reducing its 2007 carbon footprint by 10% by 2015. An update to the strategy was published in 2010.

All NHS organisations must take action to reduce carbon emissions, and PCTs can take a public lead. For guidance, see www.sdu.nhs.uk.

RESOURCES

Good Corporate Citizenship Assessment Model

www.corporatecitizen.nhs.uk

Commissioning for Sustainable Development: A How-To Guide for Commissioners

www.sdu.nhs.uk/page.php?page_id=167

NHS Carbon Reduction Strategy (2009)

<http://tinyurl.com/aevd1b>

NHS Carbon Reduction Update

<http://tinyurl.com/ycqkkrd>

World Class Commissioning resources

<http://tinyurl.com/qxzcee>

Securing the Future

<http://tinyurl.com/dm3fr5>

NICE guidance on physical activity

<http://tinyurl.com/y87wd6k>

Practice-Based Commissioning resources

<http://tinyurl.com/6hqupo>

NHS contract guidance

<http://tinyurl.com/ydutoja>

Procuring for Carbon Reduction (P4CR)

<http://tinyurl.com/y8s3cbo>

Sustainable development: The key to tackling health inequalities

www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=1053

Sustainable tendering and contracting

Commissioners can make a significant contribution to sustainable development by using their position and buying power to influence key partners and providers.

A key way of doing this is by including sustainable development requirements in tendering documents and in the performance monitoring sections of the contracts that follow. By doing this, NHS commissioners can signal the importance of sustainable development when doing business with the NHS – and can make a real difference to improving health and sustainable development in the UK. Guidance on this is available in the NHS Sustainable Development Unit guide, *Commissioning for Sustainable Development: A How-To Guide for Commissioners* (www.sdu.nhs.uk/page.php?page_id=167).

In the context of their strategic plans, commissioners can ensure that ongoing contract management is informed by sustainability considerations, for example when negotiating annual activity plans, developing service development plans and specifications, agreeing clinical and performance indicators or using incentive schemes.

Case study

NHS MANCHESTER

Influencing suppliers and providers

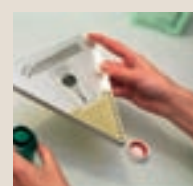
NHS Manchester commissions extensive healthcare services and is committed to supporting sustainable development. The trust has developed questions on sustainable development that are now included in all of its tendering documents during the commissioning of services.

Short-listed providers must show that they have considered sustainable development in their bids – demonstrating that they are developing employment opportunities for local people, minimising energy use and waste production, promoting sustainable travel and opening up procurement contracts to local suppliers.

Case study

NHS GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Sustainable commissioning



NHS Gloucestershire has established a sustainability strategy group to oversee the development of a budgeted

sustainable development strategy, focussing on the key areas of the Good Corporate Citizenship Assessment Model. The group aims to ensure that sustainability principles are embedded in its corporate policies, strategies, programmes and services. The group monitors data on sustainability issues, such as energy performance, and business miles, and reports on its activities in an annual report.

The trust conducted a pharmaceutical waste audit, and discovered that wasted medicines were costing over £4 million a year – as well as contributing to its carbon footprint. It conducted a patient survey to understand why medicines were being wasted, and issued a number of recommendations to reduce waste.

NHS Gloucestershire is working in partnership with its providers to commission services that protect the environment; target spending so money circulates locally for longer; reduce carbon emissions; and reduce unnecessary prescribing of pharmaceuticals.

The Sustainable Development Commission's *Healthy Futures* programme, funded by the Department of Health, helps the NHS to maximise its contribution to the health of individuals, communities and the environment. For more information visit www.sd-commission.org.uk/health.

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The small print.

This newsletter is made entirely of that paper you put out every week for the council to recycle. It was printed with inks made from vegetable oil and without using any water or alcohol (the main materials used by most printers), so it will all wash off nicely when you recycle it. The report's production was powered by renewable energy and the whole process, including transportation, is carbon neutral.