

# Sustainability & Reaching Net Zero A Homecare Industry view

Version 1 Final 22nd July 2025

## 1. Introduction

The UK is committed to reaching net zero by 2050. This means the UK government is legally required to meet this target. In addition, Scotland has set its own target and is aiming to become a net zero economy by 2045<sup>1</sup>.

Achieving net zero is not just a UK target, it's a global initiative, agreed within a legally binding international treaty referred to as the Paris Agreement<sup>2</sup>. This international agreement sets the framework for achieving net zero emissions, with 196 Parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) entering into. Within this agreement each country outlines their individual plans to reduce emission through 'Nationally Determined Contributions – (NDCs)'. This means that individual countries may have different target dates. The Agreement includes commitments from all countries to reduce their emissions and work together to adapt to the impacts of climate change and calls on countries to strengthen their commitments over time<sup>2</sup>.

Climate change is a global emergency that goes beyond national borders. It is an issue that requires international cooperation and coordinated solutions at all levels. This means UK businesses and organisations all must contribute to achieving this target. The Government has a 'Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 06/21: Taking Account of Carbon Reduction Plans in the Procurement of Major Government Contracts', issued by the UK

**But what does this mean, why is it important and what is the homecare industry doing to help achieve net zero?**

## 2. What does this mean

Today we are experiencing unprecedented rapid warming from human activities, primarily due to burning fossil fuels that generate greenhouse gas emissions<sup>4</sup>. Greenhouse gases are in the Earth's atmosphere; they trap heat causing the earth's temperature to rise. The most common greenhouse gases include carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O).

This accounts for extreme weather events, such as heatwaves, floods, rising sea levels due to melting glaciers putting coastal communities at risk, Ocean acidification, impacting marine life and coral reefs, changes in precipitation patterns and disruptions to ecosystems and wildlife habitats.

### 3. Why is it important

Let's examine the concerns related to human health, followed by a summary of other important considerations.

#### 3.1 Human health concerns:

Altered growing seasons and water availability can affect crop yields and food security. Heat stress, wildfires, spread of diseases.

Warmer temperatures over time are changing weather patterns and disrupting the usual balance of nature. This poses many risks to human beings and all other forms of life on Earth.

1. It is now recognised that climate change is the single biggest health threat facing humanity. The impacts are already harming health through air pollution, disease, extreme weather events, forced displacement, food insecurity and pressures on mental health. Every year, environmental factors take the lives of around 13 million people<sup>4</sup>.
2. Meeting the goals of the Paris Agreement could save about a million lives a year worldwide by 2050 through reductions in air pollution alone. Avoiding the worst climate impacts could help prevent 250,000 additional climate-related deaths per year from 2030 to 2050, mainly from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress<sup>4</sup>.
3. The value of health gains from reducing carbon emissions would be approximately double the global cost of implementing carbon mitigation measures<sup>4</sup>.
4. Over 90 per cent of people breathe unhealthy levels of air pollution, largely resulting from burning fossil fuels driving climate change. In 2018, air pollution from fossil fuels caused \$2.9 trillion in health and economic costs, about \$8 billion a day<sup>4</sup>.
5. Transportation produces around 20 per cent of global carbon emissions. Alternatives like walking and cycling are not only green but also offer major health benefits, such as reducing the risk of many chronic health conditions and improving mental health.
6. Systems to produce, package and distribute food generate a third of greenhouse gas emissions. More sustainable production would mitigate climate impacts and support more nutritious diets that could prevent close to 11 million premature deaths a year<sup>4</sup>.
7. Health systems are the main line of defence for populations faced with emerging health threats, including from climate change. To protect health and avoid widening health inequities, countries must build climate-resilient health systems<sup>4</sup>.
8. Most countries identify health as a priority sector vulnerable to climate change. But a huge finance gap remains. Less than 2 per cent of multilateral climate finance goes to health projects<sup>4</sup>.
9. Healthy societies rely on well-functioning ecosystems to provide clean air, fresh water, medicines and food security. These help to limit disease and stabilize the climate. But biodiversity loss is happening at an unprecedented rate, impacting human health worldwide and increasing the risk of emerging infectious diseases<sup>4</sup>.

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### 3.2 Summary of other important considerations<sup>4</sup>:

Adaptation	Adaptation to climate change safeguards people from higher temperatures, rising seas, fiercer storms, unpredictable rainfall and more acidic oceans. Some people are more vulnerable to these effects of climate change, such as those living in poverty.
Finance & Economy	Climate finance, including \$300 billion that developed countries have agreed to provide to developing countries each year, is crucial for mitigation and adaptation actions that address climate change, such as investing in renewable energy and resilient infrastructure. Climate action is not a budget buster or economy-wrecker. To the contrary, it yields significant returns – creating jobs, investment, and business opportunities. The clean energy sector alone is already contributing significantly to GDP growth in many countries across the world.
Jobs	A green transition, including a shift to renewable energy, the manufacturing of electric vehicles and construction of energy-efficient buildings, will create 24 million jobs by 2030, far more than the 6 million that could be lost.
Renewable Energy	Derived from natural resources that are abundant and continuously replenished, renewable energy is key to a safer, cleaner, and sustainable world. Sunlight, wind and water, for example, are such sources that are constantly being replenished.
Transport	Most cars, trucks, ships and planes run on fossil fuels, such as gasoline, diesel and kerosene, which release carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas. Road vehicles account for the largest part, but emissions from ships and planes continue to grow.
Nature	Healthy ecosystems can provide 37 per cent of the mitigation needed to limit global temperature rise. Damaged ecosystems release carbon instead of storing it.
Ocean	The ocean is central to reducing global greenhouse gas emissions and stabilizing the Earth's climate. The ocean generates 50 per cent of the planet's oxygen (UNEP), absorbs 25 per cent of all carbon dioxide emissions (IPCC) and captures 90 per cent of the excess heat generated by these emissions (UNEP).
Water	Water and climate change are inextricably linked. Climate change affects the world's water in complex ways. From unpredictable rainfall patterns to shrinking ice sheets, rising sea levels, floods and droughts – most impacts of climate change come down to water (UN Water).
Early Warning	Climate change is causing more frequent and intense extreme weather events, resulting in widespread adverse impacts and related losses and damages to nature and people. Early warning systems to predict floods, droughts, and storms, for instance, are a proven,

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	efficient, and cost-effective way to save lives and jobs, land and infrastructure, and support long-term sustainability.
Critical Energy Transmission Materials	Demand for critical Minerals is projected to triple by 2030 as the world transitions from fossil fuels to renewable energy to reduce global carbon dioxide emissions to net zero by 2050.
Small Island Developing States	Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are a group of <b>37 member countries and 20 other territories</b> that share similar social, economic, and environmental challenges and are particularly vulnerable to climate change.

### 4. What is the industry doing to achieve net Zero

It is important that global warming is limited to manageable levels. This means rapidly reducing the emissions being released into the Earth’s atmosphere and removing greenhouse gases (GHGs) to avoid a dangerous climate change. Every organisation must help the UK achieve these target levels and the Homecare Industry must also take this into account.

As a national trade body of the clinical homecare Industry, the NCHA acknowledges the pressing global challenge of achieving net Zero and we acknowledge our responsibility to fully endorse that all homecare providers should incorporate sustainability principles into all core business practices. This means, helping each member to fully understand Green Houses Gases (GHGs) often referred to as “net Zero,” which refers to achieving a balance where the amount of GHGs released into the atmosphere is equal to the amount removed. In essence, it means reducing emissions as much as possible and then actively removing any remaining GHGs from the atmosphere. Therefore, NHCA make the following recommendations:

#### 4.1 Recommendations

##### Recommendation 1: Sustainability Principles

All NCHA Homecare Providers share the view of incorporating sustainability principles into all core business practices. This also requires that each Homecare Provider will be committed to achieving their own ‘Climate Change Goal / Commitment’ via the development of a GHG Protocol – Carbon Reduction Plan which is compliant with PPN 06/21.

It is important to note that: As part of the commissioning of homecare services all homecare provider members of the NCHA abide by the Government’s 'Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 06/21: Taking Account of Carbon Reduction Plans in the Procurement of Major Government Contracts', issued by the UK. Therefore, all homecare providers have targets.

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### Recommendation 2: Emission Categories

All NCHA Homecare Providers measure Scope 1, 2 and subsets of scope 3 emissions. (A PPN 06/21 requirement)	
GHG Scope 1	Direct emissions resulting from sources that are owned and controlled by each Homecare Provider
GHG Scope 2	Indirect emissions from purchase of electricity and onsite EV charging
GHG Scope 3	Indirect emissions from other sources not included in Scope 1 and 2 categories

NCHA recognises the importance of each homecare provider knowing what their baseline emission history is to set targets for measurable emission reductions in the future. Initially this may be internal with a secondary set of targets for any additional services procured via third parties.

### Recommendation 3: Knowing your baseline emissions performance

All NCHA Homecare Providers should conduct a baseline emission performance to be used as a reference point for setting and measuring emission targets in the future. Again, a total emission performance and target set with a breakdown for Scope 1,2 and 3 is required.

Once a company has set emission targets based on their own baseline performance it is important to monitor and measure performance against projected targets, out to 2045. This information should be updated on a regular basis and be available in the public domain.

### Recommendation 4: Reporting on your emissions performance based in projected targets.

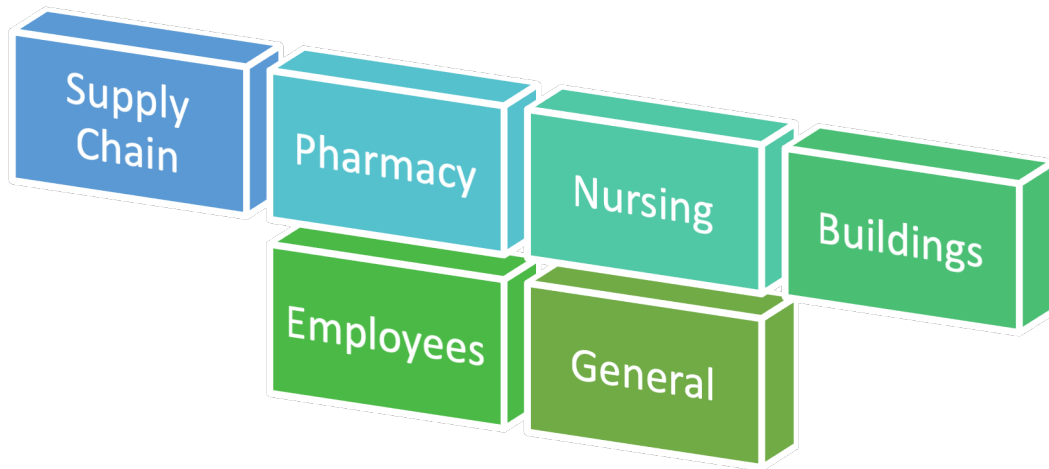
All NCHA Homecare Providers should report on their in-house performance vs project emission targets. This information should be in the public domain.

## 4.2 Additional Considerations / Priorities for putting your own house in order

NCHA are aware that all Homecare Provider members already adopt an environmental mentality with a focus on achieving measurable results. It is considered that key themes within the Clinical homecare Sector have the potential to drive the industry to reaching Net Zero targets. The following are just some themes that our members are taking into account.

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Key Theme(s)	Options & Considerations
<p>Supply Chain – Logistics, Fuel and Energy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electric Vehicle Options for medication delivery</li> <li>• Use of Van mounted solar panels</li> <li>• Hydrogenated Vegetable oil trail (HVO) – diesel alternatives for vehicles</li> <li>• Renewable Energy Sources</li> <li>• ULEZ and CAZ in urban areas – Compliant vans operating within areas across the devolved nations in Ultra-low emission zones and clean air zones without paying penalties.</li> <li>• Targets for MPG improvements</li> <li>• Replacement of existing fleets with next-generation vehicles</li> <li>• Delivery of Medication via optimised routes eliminating unnecessary miles utilised to deliver medications</li> </ul>
<p>Pharmacy: Waste Management including medication optimisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing waste recycling and energy recovery</li> <li>• Offsetting Clinical Waste incineration</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electronic transmission of documentation including Prescription Management electronic signatures (E-Sign)</li> <li>• Reduction of Paper – more use of electronic solutions and minimisation of hard copies. Also to use recycled paper where necessary e.g. Patient Welcome Packs, Educational Material on websites and portals.</li> <li>• Re-Use and Re-cycle packaging materials</li> <li>• Switching from Polystyrene cold chain medication boxes to wool</li> <li>• Limit single use plastic in packaging and moving to sustainable alternatives</li> </ul>
<p>Nursing:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of Patient Support Programmes, designed to support and train patients to reduce medication waste</li> <li>• Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) minimising waste</li> <li>• Optimising nurse travel re-route planning. Reducing nurse and patient travel</li> <li>• Use of secure online technology to offer remote patient training e.g. video conferencing options (Secure)</li> <li>• Investing in nursing skills to maximise nursing capabilities to maximise patient facing time</li> </ul>
<p>Buildings: Offices, Premises including Warehouses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Installation of solar panels</li> <li>• switching to Low Density Lighting (LEDs) and use of motion sensed lighting</li> <li>• Increasing waste recycling and energy recovery across all premises</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of composting bins for food and drink wastage for employees to use on site</li> </ul>
<p>Employees – Commuting and Business Travel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electric Vehicle Plan for Nursing / Employees</li> <li>• Employees incentivised to carpool where possible</li> <li>• Use of non-motorised transport with bikes and secure bike parks</li> <li>• Staff training with clear business aims and objectives shared across the business – Communication Responsibilities.</li> <li>• All employers with greater than ten (10) employees have a legal obligation to separate waste from recycling into district streams. This will ensure appropriate bins are deployed e.g. Composting bins for food and drink wastage for employees to use on site</li> <li>• Use of Technology to reduce travel if possible</li> <li>• Reduced need to travel to appointments – allowing people to work and remain independence</li> </ul>
<p>General:  Including the procurement of goods and services, with effective decision making and focus across the business</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Responsible Sourcing, ensuring Supplier Management Practices –meet homecare providers sustainability criteria</li> <li>• Reduction of face-to-face meetings – utilising technology to hold online meetings</li> <li>• Improved Geographical Access - helping to tackle inequalities</li> </ul>

## 5. Final Considerations on the value of clinical homecare to the NHS, Patients and Society

Over 650,000 people across the UK are currently receiving healthcare via an NHS-contracted Clinical homecare provider. These services are mainly used to treat long-term or chronic health conditions, conditions that would otherwise require regular visits to a hospital or pharmacy. The decision to use Clinical homecare is jointly made by the patient and their medical team. The service is often funded by the pharmaceutical manufacturer, but in some cases, it is directly funded by the NHS.

In 2024 the NCHA commissioned an independent evidence-based report entitled 'The Best Kept Secret Report, The value of clinical homecare to the NHS, Patients and Society'.

This report sought to improve understanding of clinical homecare and the value it brings to patients, the NHS and society at large. Within the report it showcases the real value delivered to the NHS, Patients and Society and there is a drive to expand services further to deliver additional value within the sector. Therefore, it is vital that homecare service provision is meeting its requirement to build a sustainable service that meet net zero targets and requirements. For the first time, this report quantifies benefits via detailed economic modelling and an objective patient survey. The following are just some of the findings of this report and many contribute to a sustainable and environmentally friendly service.

### Benefits to Patients

- Improved experience and personalised healthcare delivery
- Reduced need to travel to appointments
- allowing people to work and retain independence
- Improved geographical access, helping to tackle inequalities
- Improved adherence to treatment
- Safeguarding opportunities as specialist clinical staff visit patients at home

**75,000 Clinical Homecare patients avoid a 40-mile round trip with each delivery, mitigating geographical *inequalities and burden*. <sup>5</sup>**

**&**

**85% of Clinical Homecare patients are more likely to report that their medications were fully explained to them, compared to the national average of 62%. <sup>5</sup>**

### Benefits to the NHS

- Increased capacity by extending services outside of hospital
- Financial savings and value
- Reduced wastage and improved medicines adherence
- Reduced did-not-attend rates
- Improved medicines stock keeping and management
- Improved patient satisfaction
- Efficient switching of medicines - with significant financial benefits

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**15 Trusts worth of day case elective capacity is delivered each year by Clinical Homecare companies. <sup>5</sup>**

## Benefits to Society

- Improved patient participation in employment and education
- Reduced carbon emissions and traffic congestion
- Improved pharmacovigilance, supporting safe medicines for all

**£264m represents the annual value delivered to UK health economy - delivered through operational savings, enhanced patient experience, and societal benefits. <sup>5</sup>**

**&**

**62% of people receiving Clinical Homecare reported that it has allowed them to stay in work or education. <sup>5</sup>**

**&**

**The average distance an NHS patient travels to hospital is 16 miles. Consolidating multiple patient's medications into a single, optimised delivery route, Clinical Homecare providers significantly reduce this to 6.9 miles travelled per patient delivery.**

**As a result, carbon emissions are reduced by 22,000 metric tonnes a year. This approach aligns with the NHS Carbon Footprint Plus target, striving to achieve net zero emissions by 2045.**

**With fewer cars on the road due to consolidated delivery methods, Clinical Homecare also reduces traffic congestion. This not only contributes to a more efficient use of road infrastructure but also alleviates the strain on transportation systems, making roads less congested and promoting smoother traffic flow within communities. This creates benefits to society worth £16 million a year.**

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2. The Paris Agreement [https://unfccc.int/files/essential\\_background/convention/application/pdf/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](https://unfccc.int/files/essential_background/convention/application/pdf/english_paris_agreement.pdf)
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5. The Best Kept Secret; The value of clinical homecare to the NHS, Patients and Society <https://www.clinicalhomecare.org/bestkeptsecret/>

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## History

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