



UK HEALTH  
ALLIANCE ON  
CLIMATE CHANGE

18 May 2022

Dear Amanda Pritchard,

We at the UK Health Alliance on Climate Change are pleased and impressed that NHS England has led the way globally with its commitment, plan, funding, and programme to reach carbon net-zero by 2040 and 2045. We are now writing to urge that the commitment be made central to the revised version of the NHS Long Term Plan.

As you know, the Alliance represents most of the medical and nursing royal colleges as well as the BMA, Academy of Medical Science, BMJ, and Lancet. Between them, our members have some 960,000 members, most of the NHS professional workforce. You will know the survey that showed that nine in ten staff support the NHS net zero ambition. This is because we recognise the threat that the planetary crisis poses to the health of our patients, families, colleagues, and communities. Although many staff are tired after the pandemic, we believe that working to mitigate and adapt to the planetary crisis is work that will both inspire staff and help to alleviate the long term pressures posed by the health burden of climate change.

The plan to reach net zero by 2040 and 2045 is ambitious, but at the same time success in achieving these targets is essential for the sustainability of the health service and the UK delivering its climate commitments. Success will be achieved only if the commitment to net zero is included in every part of the Long Term Plan and every part of the service with strong governance arrangements. This will require each part of the service to be sufficiently resourced and funded to make the commitments a reality.

We know that there are many other pressures on the service, including workforce, safety, and the backlog, but the threat from the planetary crisis is so important and urgent that it needs to be the number one priority. As some of our members say, "No planet, no NHS."

The previous Long Term Plan recognised that the NHS needs transformation to be environmentally, socially, and financially sustainable. We believe there needs to be much more emphasis on health and prevention rather than sickness; communities and community services rather than hospitals; and patients rather than professionals. Some aspects of this transformation have been mooted since the NHS began and have been hard to achieve when resources have been consumed by treating sickness in hospitals rather than focusing on wellbeing, prevention, and community services.

An emphasis on responding to the planetary crisis, which increasingly the public and the NHS workforce recognise as the major threat to global health and even human survival, may be the way to encourage the transformation. Importantly, we know that the changes we need to make as a country and as individuals to mitigate and adapt to the planetary crisis are good for health.



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The Alliance will do all it can to support the Greener NHS plan, and in particular we have established and funded a net zero surgery working party that will produce evidence-based plans on how surgical teams can achieve net zero and then work to encourage their implementation. All the surgical and nursing colleges will be included in the working party, and the thinking behind the work is that surgical teams are best placed to encourage other surgical teams to reach net-zero.

If this project is successful, we will extend it to other areas that affect many of our members—for example, primary care and end-of-life care.

We urge you to put reaching net zero by 2040 and 2045 at the centre of the Long Term Plan.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Richard Smith CBE FMedSci  
Chair, UK Health Alliance on Climate Change

Dr Elaine Mulcahy  
Director, UK Health Alliance on Climate Change

**Members of UK Health Alliance on Climate Change are:**

Academy of Medical Sciences	Primary Care Respiratory Society
Association of Anaesthetists	Royal Pharmaceutical Society
Association of Clinical Psychologists	Royal College of Emergency Medicine
Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland	Royal College of General Practitioners
British Association of Critical Care Nurses	Royal College of Nursing
British Medical Journal	Royal College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology
British and Irish Association of Stroke Physicians	Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
British Medical Association	Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh
British Thoracic Society	Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow
British Society of Gastroenterologists	Royal College of Physicians, London
College of Paramedics	Royal College of Psychiatrists
Faculty of Public Health	Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh
Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Health	Royal College of Surgeons of England
Intensive Care Society	Royal College of Veterinary Science
The Lancet	Royal Society of Medicine
Nursing Standard Journal	Students for Global Health
Plant Based Health Professionals	