



## HCPC Consultation on standards of conduct, performance and ethics

### **Q8: Should improving sustainability in health and care practice be a part of the Standards?**

The UK Health Alliance on Climate Change is an alliance of 40 UK-based health organisations including Royal Colleges, Associations and Societies, Student Organisations, British Medical Journal, and the Lancet. The total membership of our members is more than one million health professionals working across all areas of care. As an alliance, we advocate for just responses to the climate and ecological crisis, promote the health benefits that flow from those responses, and empower members and health professionals to make changes in their professional and personal lives to respond to the crisis.

Across the UK, the health and care service contributes about 5% of the country's total greenhouse gas emissions. The UK government has published guidance (Government, 2022)<sup>1</sup> for health professionals, stating that patient-facing health workers have a particular role to play in influencing how resources are used and how much healthcare activity is undertaken in order to reduce the contribution of the health and care system to the climate crisis. The guidance says that climate action is a core part of the professional responsibilities of health and care professionals.

In 2022, the Health and Care Act introduced legislation on delivering net zero targets and reducing air pollution NHS England. Guidance on delivering a net zero national care service was subsequently published, laying out the direction, scale and pace of change required<sup>2</sup>. The NHS Scotland climate emergency and sustainability strategy<sup>3</sup> says we have a moral obligation to help tackle the greatest threat to human health by reducing our impact on the environment, which will require unprecedented change in how the health service works to become net zero. The NHS Wales decarbonisation strategy<sup>4</sup> places requirements under the "Wellbeing of Future Generations Act" for climate impacts to be considered at every-day decision making level in healthcare.

**The HCPC consultation on the revised Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics provides an opportunity to reflect changes to practise that will be required to achieve net zero requirements, and acknowledge the ethical and moral duty of allied health professionals to play their part in achieving these obligations. In order to achieve this, we recommend the introduction of an eleventh standard on 'sustainability in health and care' in the Standards.**

The review of the Standards provide an opportunity for the Health and Care Professions Council to play a significant role in enabling the positive transformational change in health and care that is needed, while also potentially saving many lives. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has warned that timing is crucial. Action is needed now, and cannot wait another six years until the

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<sup>1</sup> [Climate and Health: Applying All Our Health](#)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/publication/delivering-a-net-zero-national-health-service/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.scot/publications/nhs-scotland-climate-emergency-sustainability-strategy-2022-2026/pages/1/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2021-03/nhs-wales-decarbonisation-strategic-delivery-plan-2021-2030-summary.pdf>



next update. By integrating a standard on sustainability, the HCPC will make a clear statement of commitment and demonstrate leadership that others in the health sector will be inspired to follow.

We respectfully request that you consider this submission in your deliberations regarding the update of the Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics. We also wish to make you aware that a comparable recommendation has been submitted to the GMC Good Medical Practice review which is currently underway.

**a) If so, what ought to be included in the Standard?**

A standard on sustainability in health and care should be added to the Standards. Suggested wording is provided below.

**11. Practice sustainably to protect patients, the wider community and the environment**

**Minimise the environmental impact of the care you provide**

11.1 You must seek to understand basic carbon literacy and the environmental impact of products and services you provide

11.2 You must choose the treatment with the lowest carbon footprint (where data is available) wherever possible and appropriate

11.3 You must take part in sustainable quality improvement to minimise environmental and financial impact

**Exploit opportunities to promote actions that both reduce carbon emissions and benefit public health**

11.4 You must consider your journey to work and patient visits, and prioritise active travel over other modes of transport

11.5 You must provide information to patients on active travel and low carbon modes of transport to attend appointments

11.6 Where food is provided in the professional setting, you must prioritise low carbon, healthy sustainable choices, such as pulses, grains and vegetables

**Avoid unnecessary tests, procedures and prescriptions**

11.7 You must ensure all tests and procedures offered to patients are necessary

11.8 You must stop ineffective treatments

11.9 You must minimise waste in the healthcare setting

11.10 You must provide online services when possible and appropriate to reduce travel to appointments