

Cover Note for Readers of the DRAFT BLMK Primary Care Green Plan:

This is a DRAFT version of a Primary Care Green Plan for 2026-2032. This document was produced in response to a commitment in the BLMK Green Plan 2025-2032, which was published in July 2025.

It has been developed through engagement during 2025 with a group of stakeholders from primary care, including General Practice, pharmacy, optometry and dental services.

It will change before it is finalised and published, based on any comments we receive, so readers should not assume that any of the content is set in stone.

There is a second, accompanying document – a toolkit outlining the actions needed to carry out the plan. This toolkit includes 39 generic actions for all primary care staff, and several additional actions specific to the specific sector of primary care or community services.

Readers are asked to comment on the draft and the accompanying toolkit by **30 April 2026**, providing queries, comments and suggestions to sian.pither@nhs.net. We're particularly looking for feedback on the following:

- a) **The breadth and depth of ambitions** – are they sufficiently all-encompassing, while remaining achievable?
- b) **Do you think the Green Plan will work** – will it deliver the reduction in emissions we need? What needs to be stronger? What barriers that are within our control do we need to overcome?
- c) **Clarity** – are the commitments clear and sufficiently specific? Is the language easily understandable?
- d) **Call to action** – is it clear what you need to do to support delivery of the plan? Should there be more direction for any particular group?

The BLMK sustainability team will use your comments to update The Primary Care Green Plan draft to its final version ahead of approval during 2026.

The final published version, likely to be released in later Spring 2026, may also see some design changes, including some of the colours, imagery, iconography and diagrams.



**Bedfordshire, Luton
and Milton Keynes**

Health and Care Partnership

People, Places, Planet

BLMK CARES

**The BLMK Primary Care
Green Plan
2026-2032**

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BLMK Primary Care Green Plan 2026-32

Environment, Climate, Health and Healthcare

Our health is inextricably linked to the health of the environment and the planet. Climate change and environmental degradation exacerbate existing health conditions, create new health challenges, worsen population health, drive health inequalities, and, through extreme weather events, result in harm and disruption to day-to-day healthcare provision, particularly for the most vulnerable (Figure 1).

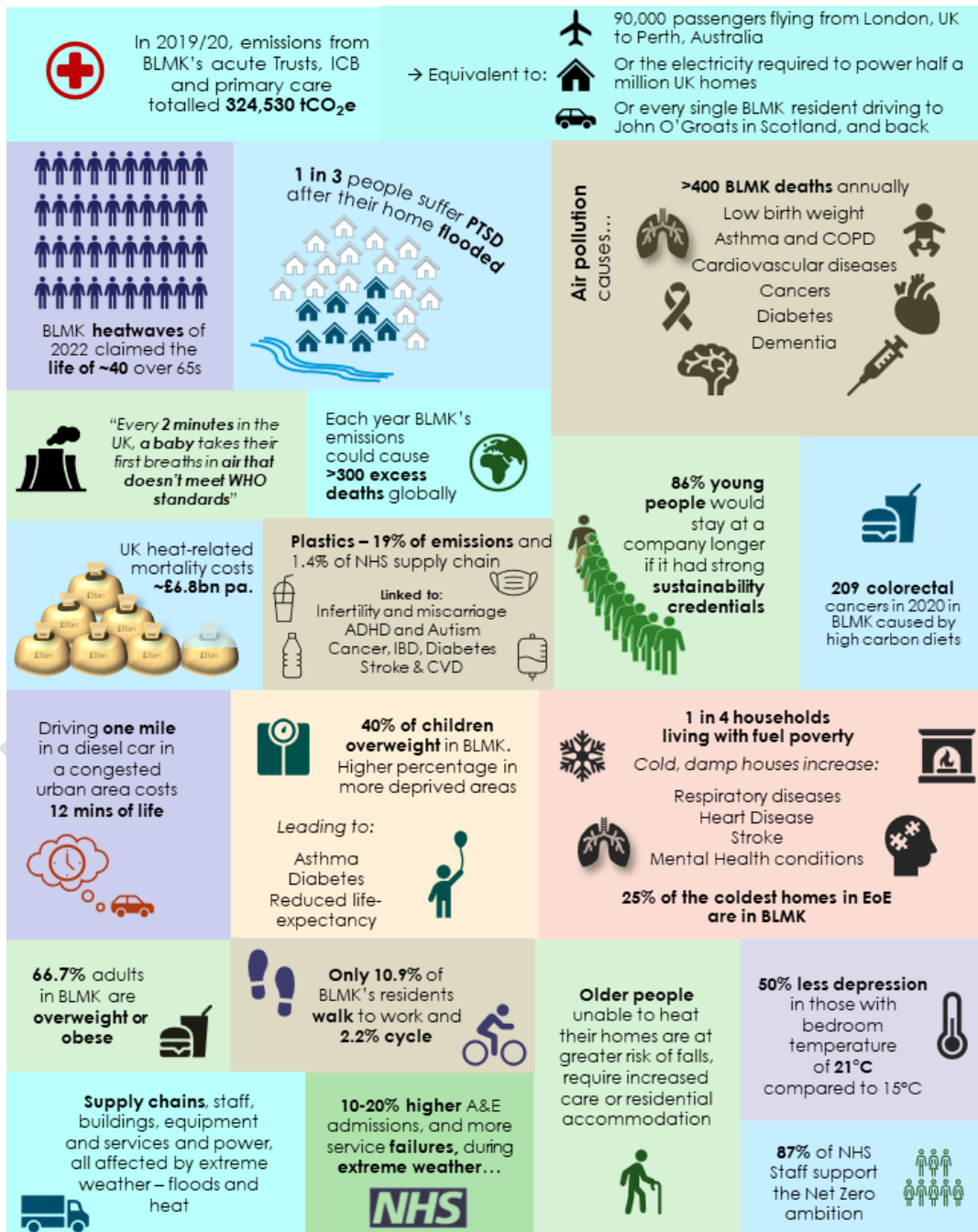


Figure 1: The impacts of climate change within BLMK and further afield (see [BLMK ICS Green Plan Health Impact Assessment](#) for references)

This is driving a higher use of health and care resources, resulting in greenhouse gas emissions (roughly 4% of the [UK's total emissions](#)), waste and pollution, leading to an accelerating deterioration of the ecosystems on which we depend.

Figure 2 demonstrates a simplified version of this “vicious cycle”; to break it, our society must **reduce the impact on the environment, including through health and care services.**

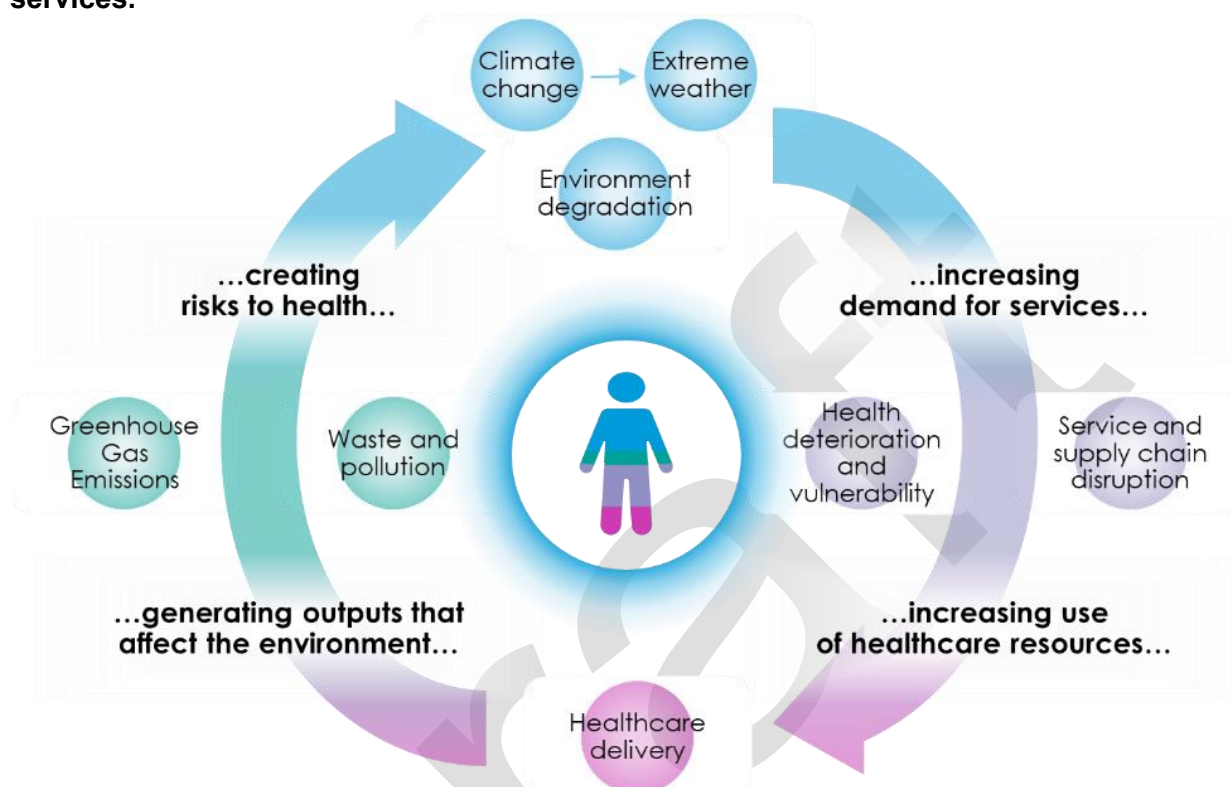


Figure 2: The link between environment and health

Great Healthcare is Sustainable Healthcare

A recent study¹ has demonstrated that beyond a particular level (~400 kgCO₂e per head of population), more carbon emissions do not necessarily mean better health outcomes; even without the large changes required for net zero, it is possible to reduce emissions without compromising quality.

Climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable health care systems are ones that **anticipate, respond to and adapt to climate-related stresses**, minimising negative impacts on people, and using opportunities to restore the environment ([WHO](#)), and follow [principles](#) for doing so:

1. increasing preventative action to stop people getting ill
2. empowering those with health issues or disabilities to live the fullest life possible
3. delivering effective, efficient, productive, and well-managed services, minimising waste
4. shifting to ways of doing things that reduce emissions

¹ Romanello et al. (2024) *The Lancet*, **404**(10465), 1847-1896

Primary Care and Climate Change

As the first point of contact for most patients, Primary Care is under increasing pressure from poor health connected to Climate Change and will benefit from sustainable changes. Increased digitalisation of services will free up staff time, improved health will reduce activity and prescriptions, less use of single use items will reduce costs associated with waste disposal, increased insulation and wiser energy use will cut bills.

Primary Care accounts for approximately 23% of NHS total carbon emissions. Of this, around **60% is attributed to medicines**. The remaining emissions are distributed across non-clinical activities as in [Figure 3](#) below.

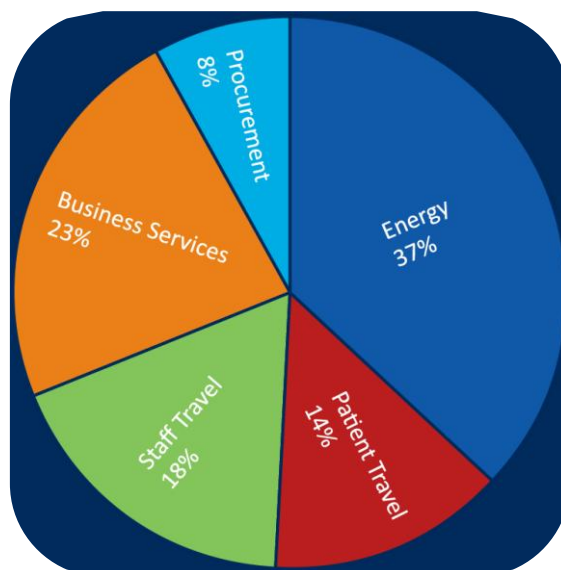


Figure 3 : [RCGP Decarbonising General Practice Guide](#)

The BLMK ICS Green Plan

The [BLMK ICS Green Plan 2025-32](#) published in July 2024 sets out the strategy and delivery plan to support our vision statement “**People, Places and Planet**” – delivering the best possible health for all, and the highest value healthcare, which can **only** be achieved by living in harmony with our environment

Through coproduction with partner organisations and residents, we have put together a programme demonstrating that **BLMK CARES**: together we will create a **Culture** that supports action on climate change, help communities to **Adapt** to climate change, be more conscious of the **Resources** we use, and deliver **Environmentally Sustainable** health and care.

The actions listed in the delivery plan address one or more of the vision statements **People, Places and Planet** and the **foundation** and have been grouped into four main programme areas that are most likely to be delivered together: **BLMK CARES** ([figure 5](#)) mapped to the vision ([figure 4](#))

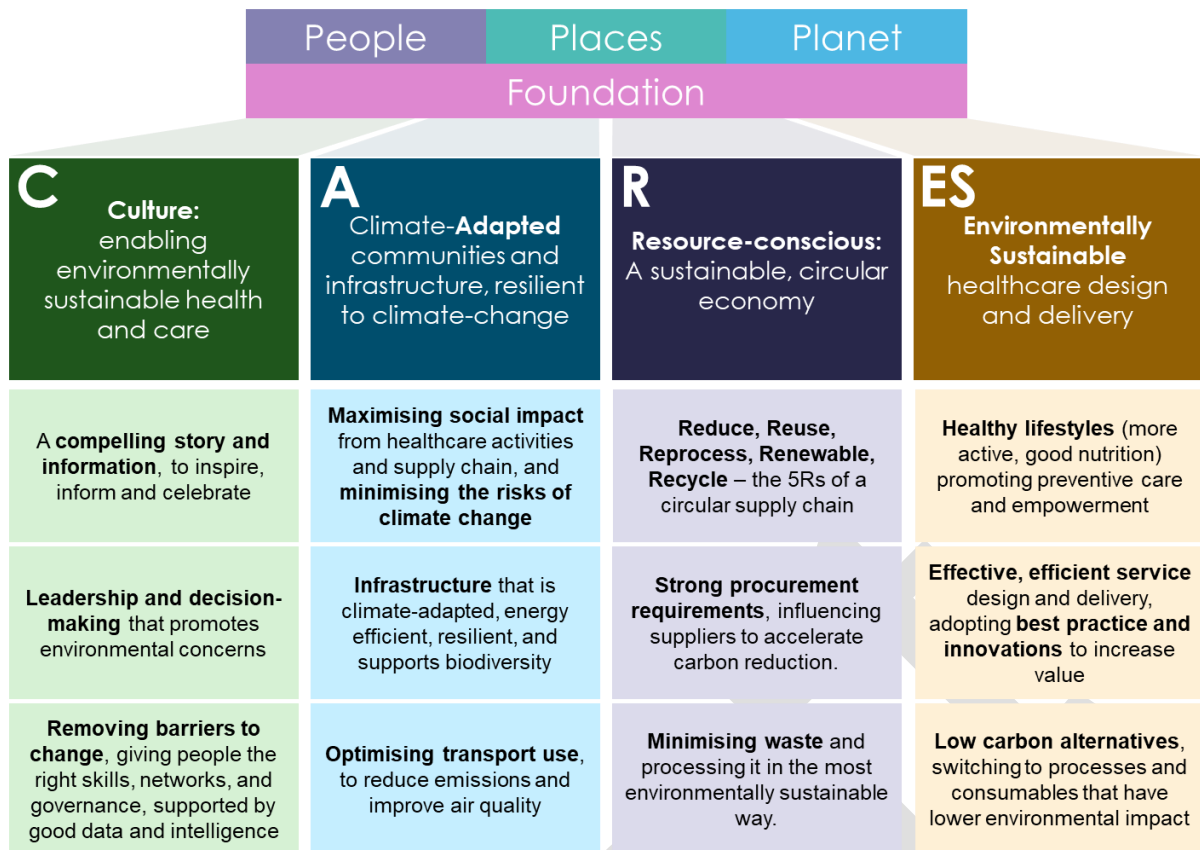


Figure 4: People, Places, Planet: BLMK CARES – The ICS Green Plan vision

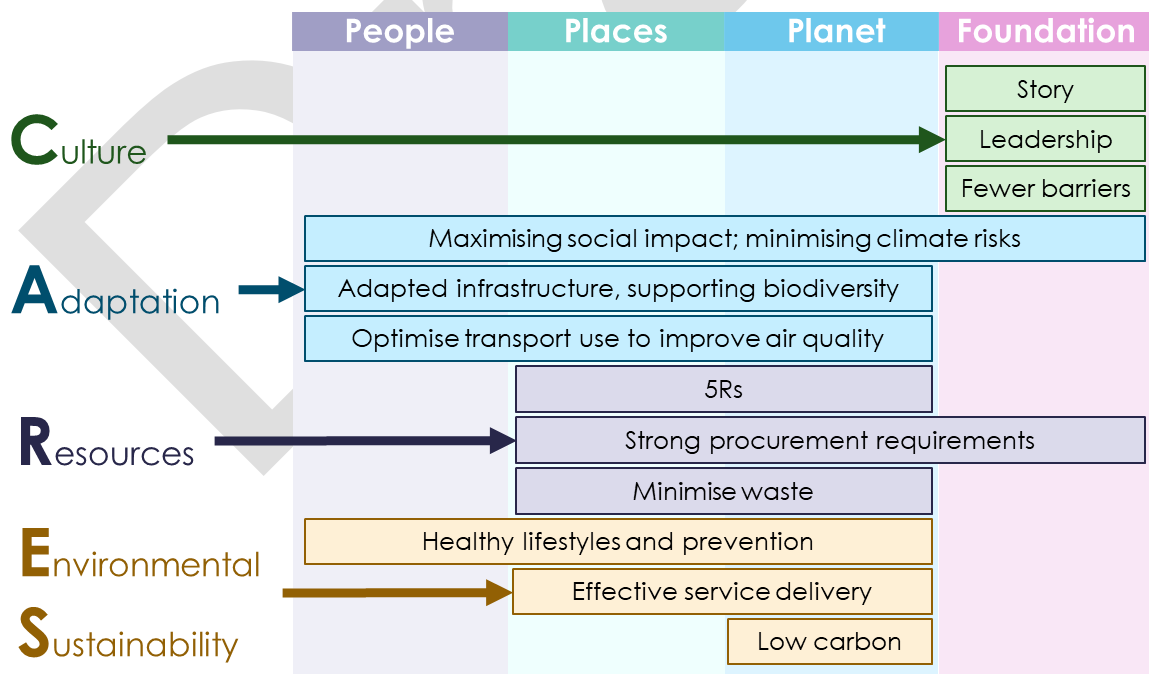


Figure 5: BLMK CARES: mapping the Green Plan activities to the vision.

Who is this plan for?

This plan is aimed at anyone working in Primary Care across Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes, to encourage and enable colleagues to implement carbon-reduction initiatives while continuing to provide high-quality clinical care for patients.

The plan is intended as a practical toolkit to help you identify actions your practice can take to reduce its carbon footprint.

Even small steps make a meaningful difference. ***You're not expected to implement every suggestion*** — focus on what you can do and encourage colleagues to consider the actions they can take.

The connection between health and the environment is clear; what is better for the planet is better for patients and our local communities.

Actions

In this toolkit there are generic actions that can be carried out across all parts of primary care and specific actions for staff in:

- General Practice
- Dental Practices
- Community Pharmacies
- Optometry Practices
- Integrated Urgent Care Providers

All the actions are aligned to the ICS Green Plan action themes BLMK **CARES**:

Culture: Enabling environmentally sustainable health and care

Adaptation: Climate -adapted communities and infrastructure, resilient to climate change

Resource-Conscious: A sustainable, circular economy

Environmentally Sustainable: healthcare design and delivery

Actions will be categorised as:

- **Must Do** - legislation/CQC-based
- **Priority** - biggest wins
- **Should do** – everything else that can be done to reduce carbon emissions

They will also indicate whether an action has an associated benefit for:

- **The Environment**
- **Health**
- **Finance/Business**
- **Staff**
- **Social**

Each action will also be RAG rated as to **ease of completion**.

Appendix 1 [Insert weblink]

Contains further information on how to implement changes and measure and record the results.

Resources

Relevant resources are included throughout the Action Plan Appendix 1, but all colleagues are primarily directed to:

- [NHSE Greener NHS](#) website
- [EoE Greener NHS Hub](#) on the Futures site
- [Centre For Sustainable Healthcare](#) website

Both platforms offer extensive information, learning materials, project ideas and templates, case studies, and access to regional and national networks and working groups.

SusQI Methodology

Actions should be implemented using the Sustainability in Quality Improvement (SusQI) method.

Sustainability in Quality Improvement (SusQI) is an approach to improving healthcare in a holistic way, by assessing quality and value through the [sustainable value lens](#).

In SusQI, the health outcomes of a service are measured against its environmental, social and economic costs and impacts to determine its “*sustainable value*”. SusQI embeds the [The Principles of Sustainable Healthcare](#) (Figure 6):

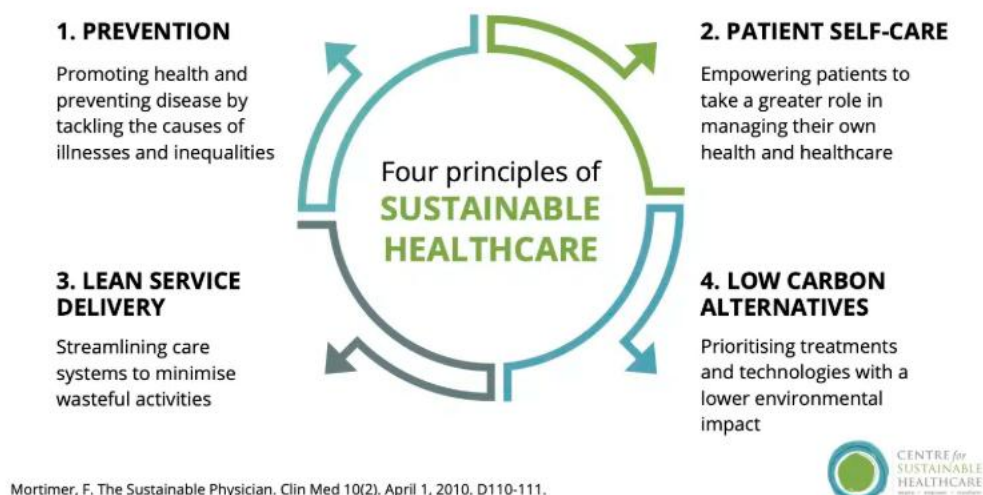


Figure 6: [The principles of Sustainable Healthcare – CSH](#)

[The Centre for Sustainable Healthcare](#) has many resources for [SuSQI](#) projects including:

- SusQI Training
- Step by Step guide
- Project resources
- Over 100 Case studies
- SusQI Showcases

All data generated through Green Plan actions and SusQI projects should be systematically used to inform future initiatives and care pathways. For example:

- When an alternative to medication is implemented—such as Green Social Prescribing—the resulting patient outcomes, practice-level outcomes, and wider system benefits should be shared with colleagues, commissioners and neighbourhood Teams
- Capturing and disseminating these insights ensures that all benefits and learnings are fully recognised and can be used to influence future funding decisions, service transformation, and pathway redesign

By embedding this feedback loop, the system can continuously improve sustainability outcomes while supporting high-quality patient care.

BLMK Primary Care Green Plan 2026-32 Action Toolkit

Actions Overview

Key to RAG Rating:

Ease of Task		Benefits	
	Very easy / short process		Lots of benefit
	Little harder / more time required		Some benefit
	Needs effort / long process		A little benefit

Generic Actions for all Primary Care

Culture – Education, Leadership and removing barriers to change

No.	Culture Action	Must Do	Priority	Should do	Ease of task	Benefits				
						Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
1	Understand the guidance re CQC requirements	✓						✓	✓	
2	Declare a climate emergency		✓					✓	✓	
3	Provide training and education for all staff appropriate to their role		✓					✓	✓	
4	Encourage and empower all members of staff to take action		✓					✓	✓	
5	Pick a focus for your business		✓					✓	✓	

No.	Culture Action	Must Do	Priority	Should do	Ease of task	Benefits				
						Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
6	Sign up to useful toolkits/resources e.g. Greener Practice Platform, Green Impact Dentistry Toolkit		✓					✓	✓	
7	Swap to a Greener bank		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
8	Creating a network of Green Champions to support ideas and solutions			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
9	Incorporate Sustainability into Quality Improvement Projects to include carbon footprinting			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Educate Patients in the reasons for the changes and how they can make a difference			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
11	Calculate your carbon footprint			✓				✓		

Adaptation – Building resilience, infrastructure, optimising transport

No.	Action	Must Do	Priority	Should Do	Ease of task	Benefits				
						Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
1	Decarbonise the practice’s heat and energy supply where possible		✓			✓		✓		✓
2	Use of blinds, shutters and curtains for insulation		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
3	Promote active travel for staff and patients (walking and wheeling)		✓			✓	✓		✓	✓
4	Promote public transport to staff and patients		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

5	Install insulation in premises where possible			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
6	Increase biodiversity (staff/patient gardens, green roofs)			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Resources – 3Rs, supply chain influence and minimising waste

No.	Action	Must Do	Priority	Should Do	Ease of Task	Benefits				
						Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
1	Sustainable procurement of medicines/consumables	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓
2	Reduce single-use items		✓			✓		✓		✓
3	Switching to reusable equipment		✓			✓		✓		✓
4	Reduce chemical use		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
5	Reduce waste		✓			✓		✓	✓	
6	Reduce energy usage		✓			✓		✓		
7	Carry out a waste audit			✓		✓		✓	✓	
8	Stock control and audits			✓		✓		✓		
9	Office assets reuse			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
10	Reduce water waste			✓		✓		✓		
11	Choose digital over paper			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
12	Optimise data storage			✓		✓		✓	✓	
13	Reusable water bottles, cups			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
14	Replace water deliveries with water filters			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	

Environmentally Sustainable – Supporting healthier lifestyles, service design & delivery and low carbon alternatives										
No.	Action	Must Do	Priority	Should Do	Ease of Task	Benefits				
						Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
1	Increasing preventative healthcare using data to flag patients at risk of disease	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓
2	Digitalisation of information, prescriptions and bookings	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3	Virtual consultations	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4	Proactive follow-ups and call-ins		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
5	Reducing food waste in the Practice		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
6	Encourage staff to eat a lower-carbon diet			✓		✓	✓		✓	
7	Encourage patients to eat a lower-carbon diet			✓		✓	✓			✓
8	Combined appointments			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Sector Specific Actions

General Practice

No.	Culture Action	Must Do	Priority	Should Do	Ease of Task	Benefit				
						Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
1	Sign up to the Green Impact for Health Toolkit and/or the Greener Practice Platform		✓						✓	
2	Sign up to the Repeat Prescribing Toolkit		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Resources Action										
1	Reusable Instruments		✓			✓		✓		
2	Streamline ordering of Chronic Disease Blood Tests		✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
Environmentally Sustainable Action										
1	Improved Respiratory care	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	Inhalers	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	
3	Green medicines switches		✓			✓		✓		
4	Polypharmacy		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5	Social Prescribing		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Green Social Prescribing		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Food as a treatment		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
8	Exercise as a treatment		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9	Increasing vaccinations		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
10	Condition-specific 'One-stop shops'			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Dental Practice

No.	Culture Action	Must Do	Priority	Should Do	Ease of Task	Benefits				
						Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
1	Sign up to the Green Impact for Health Dentistry Toolkit		✓					✓	✓	
2	Plastic-free patient oral care supplies			✓		✓				
Resources Action										
1	Nitrous oxide		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	Phase out the use of Amalgam			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓

Community Pharmacy

No.	Culture Action	Must Do	Priority	Should Do	Ease of Task	Benefit				
						Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
1	Sign up to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society Greener Pharmacy Toolkit		✓					✓	✓	
2	Ensure drug labels state “Return to Pharmacy”		✓			✓		✓		✓
Resources Action										
1	Check patients understanding of medication changes on discharge from hospital	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓
2	Check patient’s technique when issuing inhalers	✓				✓	✓	✓		✓
3	Medicines waste reduction		✓			✓	✓	✓		
4	Plastic bags switch to paper			✓		✓		✓		✓
5	Re-Hale scheme			✓		✓				
6	Pencycle scheme			✓		✓				
Environmentally Sustainable Action										
1	Promote vaccinations			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Optometry Practice

No.	Culture Action	Must Do	Priority	Should do	Ease of Task	Benefits				
						Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
1	Educate patients on microplastic pollution due to incorrect contact lens disposal			✓		✓				✓
2	Complete the ABDO Sustainability Self-Assessment		✓					✓	✓	
Resources Action										
1	Signpost to Recycling schemes		✓			✓				✓
2	Procure with less packaging		✓			✓		✓		✓
Environmentally sustainable										
1	Procure eyewear from sustainable materials		✓			✓		✓		✓

Integrated Urgent Care Providers

No.	Resources Action	Must Do	Priority	Should do	Ease of Task	Benefits				
						Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
1	Choose Digital over Paper			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Decarbonise Vending Machines			✓		✓	✓		✓	✓

Further information can be found in **Appendix 1: BLMK Primary Care Green Plan Actions [insert web link]**

This will:

- Explain:
 - why each action should be carried out
 - the benefits each action will bring
 - how to carry out each action
- Sign post to further resources such as case studies and guidance