Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes
Health and Care Partnership

People, Places, Planet

BLMK CARES

The BLMK Primary Care Green Plan 2026-2032

BLMK Primary Care Green Plan 2026-32

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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.**

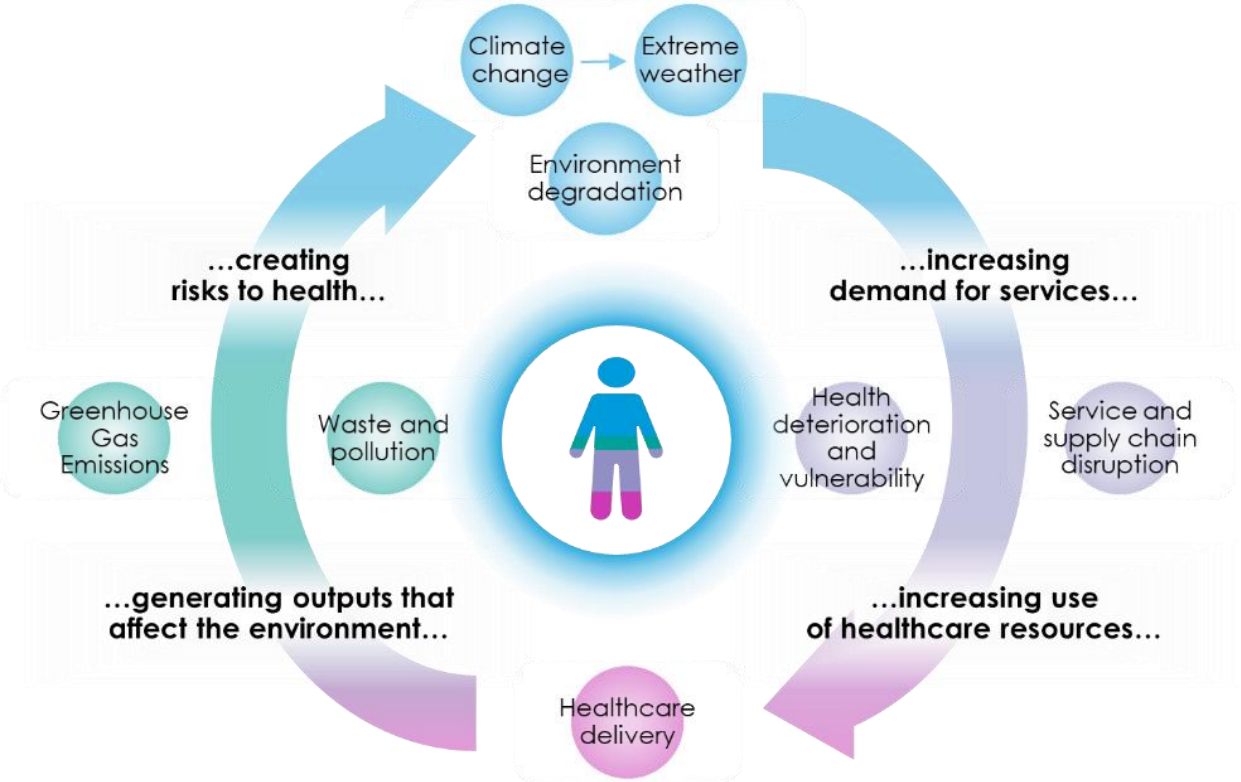

Figure 2: The link between environment and health

Great Healthcare *is* Sustainable Healthcare

A recent study[1] has demonstrated that beyond a particular level *(~400 kgCO_2e 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, reduced use of single use items will lower 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.

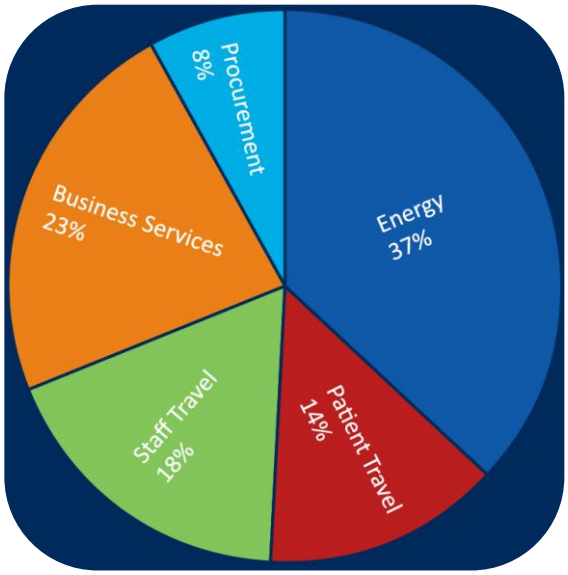

Figure 3 : RCGP Decarbonising General Practice Guide

The BLMK ICS Green Plan

The BLMK ICS Green Plan 2025-32 published in July 2025 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)

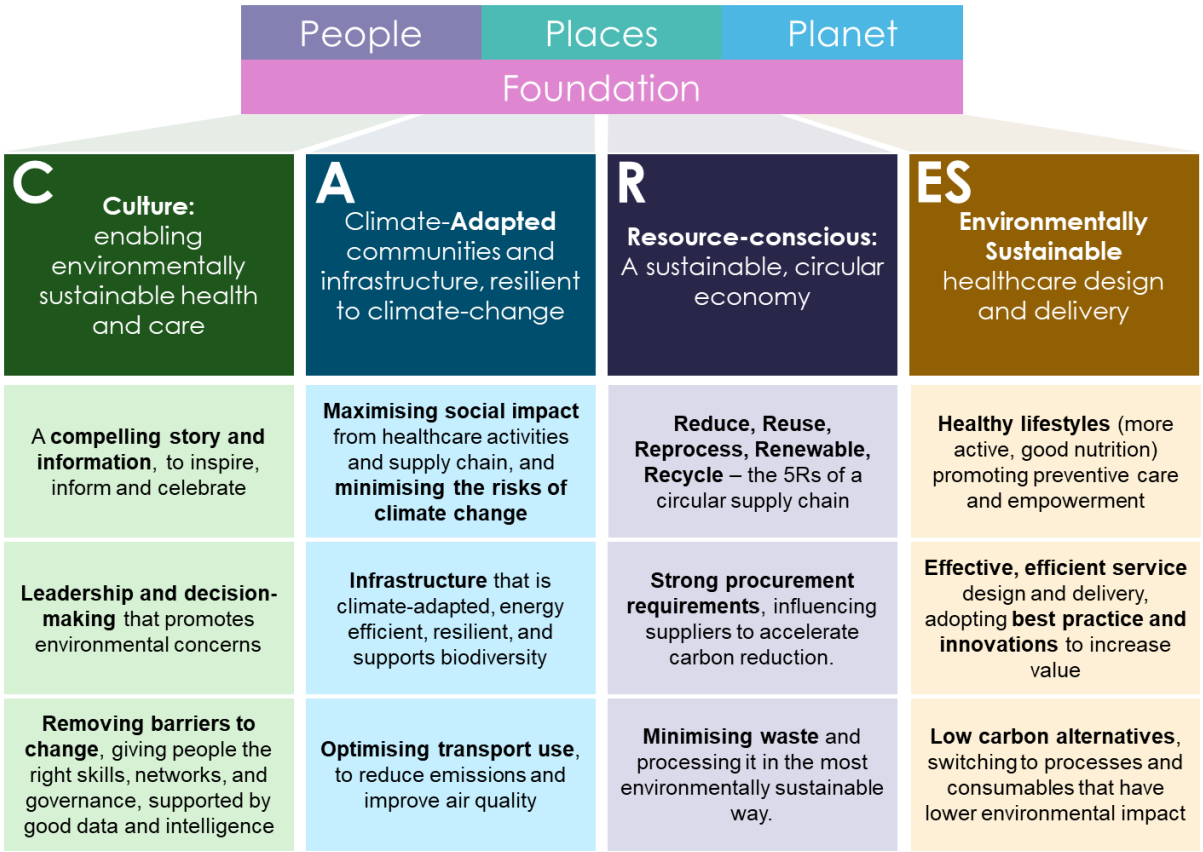

Figure 4: People, Places, Planet: BLMK CARES – The ICS Green Plan vision

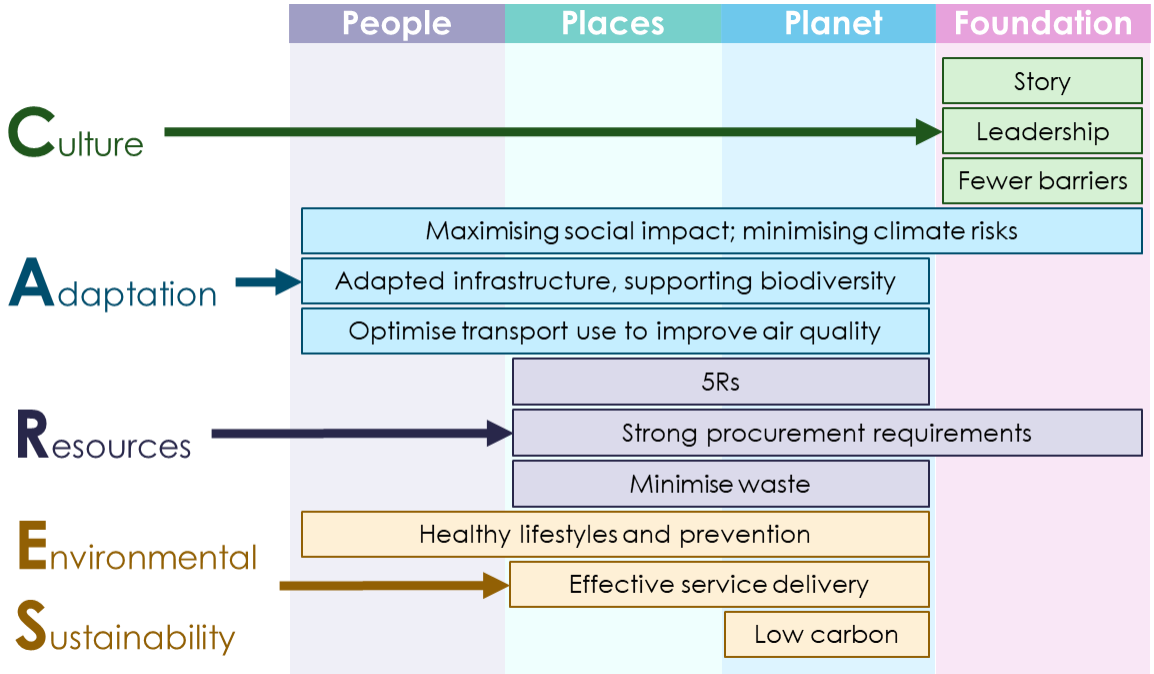

Figure 5: BLMK CARES: mapping the Green Plan activities to the vision.

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.

Please also consider **neighbourhood health developments** and which actions could generate enhanced impact through collaboration and integration

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

Integration and Neighbourhood Working

Developing a neighbourhood health service will require commissioners to increasingly use population-based contract models to enable providers to work together to deliver joined-up care.

This can provide opportunities for greater carbon reduction through standardising approaches across a larger number of practices. Examples include:

- Referrals between providers e.g. social prescribing
- Medicines waste generated at different points along the pathway including prescribing, dispensing and within care settings or a patient's home

Actions *(An overview of the actions starts on page 10)*

In this toolkit there are 39 generic actions that can be carried out across all parts of primary care and 42 specific actions for staff in:

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

(An overview of the actions starts on page 10). 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
- **Quick Wins** – actions which should be easy to carry out and/or will reduce cost or emissions quickly

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

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

Each action will also be RAG rated as to **ease of the task** (*whilst understanding that this may be different between providers depending on circumstances).*

Appendix 1 – BLMK Green Plan Action Toolkit
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

These 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):

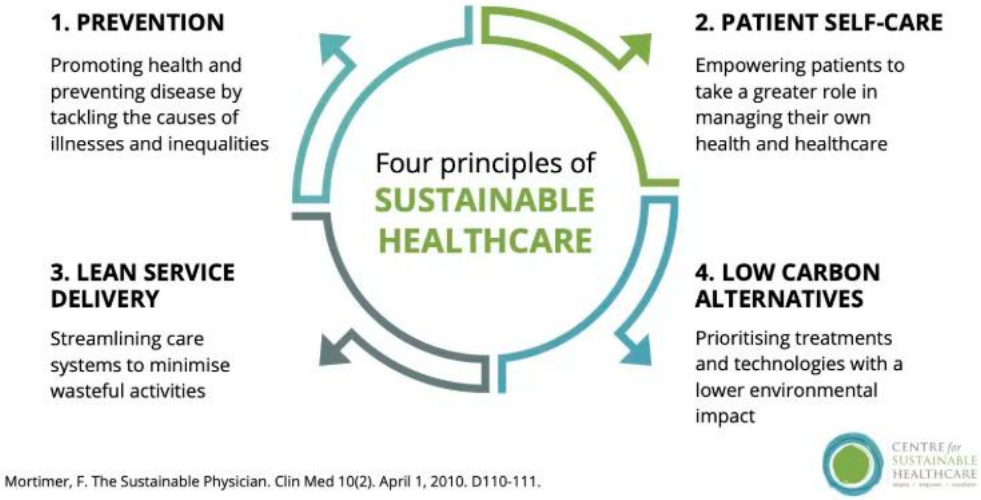

Figure 6: The principles of Sustainable Healthcare – CSH

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

Data

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.

The Primary Care Green Plan Action Tracker can be downloaded to keep track of your actions. It contains all the actions in the toolkit and space to add other actions that may be decided by Primary Care.

The Primary Care Green Plan Carbon Calculator can be used to quickly calculate the financial and carbon savings of any action being undertaken.

BLMK Primary Care Green Plan 2026-32
Action Toolkit

Actions Overview

Key to Ratings:

		Ease of Task		Benefits	
Must Do	Actions required by legislation or statutory obligations				
Priority	Actions that show a strong commitment to carbon reduction, are relatively easy to do, or could have an immediate positive impact		**Very easy / short process**		**Lots of benefit**
Should Do	Recommended actions that support progress		**Little harder / more time required**		**Some benefit**
Quick Win	Actions which will be easy to carry out and/or will reduce costs or emissions quickly		**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	Quick Win	Ease of task	Benefits				
							Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
GC1	**Understand the guidance re CQC requirements**	✓			✓				✓	✓	
GC2	**Declare a climate emergency**		✓		✓				✓	✓	
GC3	**Provide training and education for all staff appropriate to their role**		✓						✓	✓	
GC4	**Encourage and empower all members of staff to take action**		✓		✓				✓	✓	
GC5	**Pick a focus for your business**		✓		✓				✓	✓	
GC6	**Sign up to useful toolkits/resources** *e.g. Greener Practice Platform, Green Impact Dentistry Toolkit*		✓		✓				✓	✓	

No.	Culture Action Cont'd	Must Do	Priority	Should do	Quick Wins	Ease of task	Benefits				
							Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
GC7	**Swap to a Greener bank** *(one which doesn't invest in fossil fuels)*		✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓
GC8	**Creating a network of Green Champions to support ideas and solutions**			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
GC9	**Incorporate Sustainability into Quality Improvement Projects to include carbon footprinting**			✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
GC10	**Educate Patients in the reasons for the changes and how they can make a difference**			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GC11	**Calculate your carbon footprint**			✓					✓		

Adaptation – *Building resilience, infrastructure and optimising transport*

No.	Adaptation Action	Must Do	Priority	Should Do	Quick Wins	Ease of task	Benefits				
							Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
GA1	**Decarbonising the practice's heat and energy supply where possible**		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GA2	**Use of blinds, shutters and curtains for insulation**		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
GA3	**Promoting active travel for staff and patients** *(walking and wheeling)*		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GA4	**Promote public transport to staff and patients**		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GA5	**Install insulation in premises where possible**			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
GA6	**Increase biodiversity** (staff/patient gardens, green roofs)			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Resources – *3Rs, supply chain influence and minimising waste*

No.	Resources Action	Must Do	Priority	Should Do	Quick Wins	Ease of Task	Benefits				
							Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
GR1	**Sustainable procurement of medicines/consumables**	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GR2	**Reduce single-use items** *(Gloves, PPE, Couch Roll, medical equipment, plastic cups, sample pots)*		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GR3	**Switching to reusable equipment** *(sharps bins, medical equipment)*		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GR4	**Reduce chemical use** *(cleaning materials)*		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GR5	**Reduce waste** *(improved waste segregation, increased recycling, reduced clinical waste, less food waste)*		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
GR6	**Reduce energy usage** *(switch it off, turn it down, PIRs, low energy replacements, smart energy meters)*		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		
GR7	**Carry out a waste audit**			✓					✓		
GR8	**Stock control and audits**			✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
GR9	**Office assets reuse** *(desks, chairs, cupboards from other services across BLMK)*			✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
GR10	**Reduce water *waste*** *(automatic and low flow taps, toilet displacement bags, dual flushes)*			✓			✓		✓		
GR11	**Choose digital over paper** *(booking, notes, communication and prescriptions)*			✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
GR12	**Optimise data storage**			✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	
GR13	**Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)**			✓			✓		✓	✓	
GR14	**Reusable water bottles, cups**			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GR15	**Replace water deliveries with water filters**			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	

Environmentally Sustainable – *Supporting healthier lifestyles, service design & delivery and low carbon alternatives*

No.	Environmentally Sustainable Action	Must Do	Priority	Should Do	Quick Wins	Ease of Task	Benefits				
							Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
GES1	Increasing preventative healthcare using data to flag patients at risk of disease	✓					✓	✓	✓		✓
GES2	Digitalisation of information, prescriptions and bookings	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GES3	Virtual consultations	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GES4	Proactive follow-ups and call-ins		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
GES5	Reducing food waste in the Practice		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
GES6	Encourage staff to eat a lower-carbon diet *(EAT-Lancet Diet)*			✓			✓	✓		✓	
GES7	Encourage patients to eat a lower-carbon diet *(EAT-Lancet Diet)*			✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
GES8	Combined appointments			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Sector Specific Actions

General Practice

No.	Culture Action	Must Do	Priority	Should Do	Quick Wins	Ease of Task	Benefit				
							Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
GPC1	Sign up to the Green Impact for Health Toolkit and/or the Greener Practice Platform		✓		✓				✓	✓	
GPC2	Sign up to the Repeat Prescribing Toolkit		✓		✓				✓	✓	
	Resources Action										
GPR1	Reusable Instruments- *tourniquets, vaginal speculums*		✓				✓		✓		
GPE2	Streamline ordering of Chronic Disease Blood Tests		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Environmentally Sustainable Action										
GPES1	Improved Respiratory care	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GPES2	Inhalers – *MART and low carbon switches*	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GPES3	Green medicines switches – *tablets for children, pessary applicators, dressings, eye drop bottles*		✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
GPES4	Polypharmacy – *medication reviews, OOWYN*		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GPES5	Social Prescribing		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GPES6	Green Social Prescribing		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GPES7	Food as a treatment – *low-carbon changes, EAT-Lancet diet*		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓
GPES8	Exercise as a treatment – *staff and patients*		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GPES9	Increasing vaccinations		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GPES10	Condition-specific 'One-stop shops' – *heart failure, diabetes, respiratory*			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Dental Practice

No.	Culture Action	Must Do	Priority	Should Do	Quick Wins	Ease of Task	Benefits				
							Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
DC1	Sign up to the Green Impact for Health Dentistry Toolkit		✓		✓				✓	✓	
DC2	Plastic-free patient oral care supplies *(toothbrushes, toothpaste, floss)*			✓	✓		✓				✓
	Resources Action										
DR1	Nitrous oxide - *(leaks, mask fitting, ventilation, N2O capture & conversion)*		✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	
DR2	Phase out the use of Amalgam			✓			✓	✓	✓		✓
DR3	Autoclave efficiency				✓		✓		✓		
DR4	Reduce Energy Use			✓			✓		✓	✓	
DR5	Reduce water use			✓			✓		✓	✓	
DR6	Reduce impact of PPE			✓			✓		✓	✓	
DR7	Laboratory Supply Chain			✓			✓		✓	✓	
	Environmentally Sustainable Action										
DES1	Prevention through improved Oral Health			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
DES2	Travel			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓

Community Pharmacy

No.	Culture Action	Must Do	Priority	Should Do	Quick Wins	Ease of Task	Benefit				
							Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
PC1	Sign up to the Royal Pharmaceutical Society Greener Pharmacy Toolkit		✓		✓				✓	✓	
PC2	Ensure drug labels state "Return to Pharmacy"		✓		✓		✓				✓
	Resources Action										
PR1	Check patients understanding of medication changes on discharge from hospital *(DMS)*	✓			✓		✓	✓			✓
PR2	Check patient's technique when issuing inhalers *(MCAs)*	✓			✓		✓	✓			✓
PR3	Medicines Waste reduction		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓
PR4	Plastic bags switch to paper			✓	✓		✓				
PR5	Re-Hale scheme – *register an interest*			✓	✓						
PR6	Pencycle scheme - *enrol and promote*			✓	✓		✓				✓
	Environmentally Sustainable Action										
PES1	Promote vaccinations			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Optometry Practice

No.	Culture Action	Must Do	Priority	Should do	Quick Wins	Ease of Task	Benefits				
							Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
OC1	Educate patients on microplastic pollution due to incorrect contact lens disposal			✓	✓		✓				✓
OC2	Complete the ABDO Sustainability Self-Assessment		✓						✓	✓	
	Resources Action										
OR1	Signpost to Recycling schemes *(Spectacles, contact lenses, saline bottles)*		✓		✓		✓				✓
OR2	Procure with less packaging *(plastic bags, cardboard inserts)*		✓				✓		✓	✓	✓
OR3	Turn off equipment when not in use		✓		✓		✓		✓		
	Environmentally sustainable										
OES1	Procure eyewear from sustainable materials *(bamboo, recycled plastic and bio-acetate)*		✓				✓	✓	✓		✓

Integrated Urgent Care Providers

No.	Resources Action	Must Do	Priority	Should do	Quick Wins	Ease of Task	Benefits				
							Environment	Health	Finance/ Business	Staff Benefit	Social Benefit
IUCR1	Choose Digital over Paper			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
IUCR2	Decarbonise Vending Machines			✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓

Appendices

Further information on the above actions can be found in Appendix 1: BLMK Primary Care Green Plan Action Toolkit
DO NOT DOWNLOAD – designed for online use only

The toolkit will:

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

To track your actions, download Appendix 2: BLMK Primary Care Action Tracker

To calculate the financial and carbon savings of your actions, download Appendix 3: BLMK Primary Care Green Plan Calculator