



Introduction

Sustainability is critical for future proofing the NHS. In recent years, the health impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss have emerged as a global public health concern.

Given its large carbon footprint, it's essential the NHS takes action to reduce carbon impact and support more sustainable use of finite resources. For example, in the UK the NHS produces up to 600,000 tonnes of waste each year, with around 85 per cent of all medical waste is categorised as non-hazardous.

Health boards, NHS trusts and special health authorities are therefore taking action to support responsible consumption and reduce waste. At Aneurin Bevan University Health Board, the successful Gloves R Off campaign has encouraged a reduction in the amount of non-sterile gloves used across healthcare sites in Gwent. Cardiff and Vale University Health Board's 'Green ICU team' have implemented a raft of changes at University Hospital Wales' Adult Critical Care Unit, resulting in 2 tonnes of plastic waste reduction annually. These waste-saving efforts have the positive byproduct of driving financial efficiencies.

In Swansea Bay University Health Board and Velindre University NHS Trust, litter-picking and beekeeping initiatives are having a dual impact – the former on patient outcomes and the environment, the latter on staff wellbeing and the environment.

As an anchor institution that effects the lives of everyone in Wales, the NHS is working hard to put sustainability at the heart of its work, to ensure resilience and make it fit for future generations.

This briefing highlights examples of how NHS organisations in Wales are taking action to reduce their environmental impact.