

Psychiatry UK Carbon Reduction Plan (2026–2029)

Foreword

As Chief Executive of Psychiatry UK, I am proud to present our Carbon Reduction Plan for 2026–2029. This document outlines our commitment to environmental sustainability and our role in supporting the NHS’s net zero ambitions. We are targeting 2040 to achieve net zero ourselves.

We recognise the urgent need to address climate change and its profound impact on mental health. Our remote-first model and digital innovations position us uniquely to lead in sustainable healthcare delivery.

This plan reflects our determination to act decisively, without delay, and to embed sustainability into every aspect of our operations. We are publishing this plan with full confidence in its goals. Together, we will build a greener, healthier future for all.

Sincerely,

*Nell Montgomery
Chief Executive, Psychiatry UK*

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Introduction

Climate change represents a significant global health challenge - but it also offers a powerful opportunity to reshape the social and environmental foundations of health.

Its effects are already being felt in many ways:

- more frequent and severe weather events like floods, storms, and heatwaves
- deteriorating air quality; disruptions to food systems; the spread of diseases
- heightened pandemic risks
- growing mental health concerns

These climate-related health threats disproportionately affect the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, deepening existing health inequalities.

Environmentally sustainable healthcare not only reduces the carbon footprint of the health system but also enhances care quality. By focusing on prevention, empowering patients in self-care, streamlining care pathways, and adopting low-carbon alternatives, we can improve health outcomes while promoting mental wellbeing and reducing health disparities.

Background

In January 2020, the NHS became the first healthcare system in the world to commit to achieving net zero carbon emissions. This commitment was formalised with the publication of the report 'Delivering a 'Net Zero' National Health Service' in October 2020.

To support this ambition, the NHS Standard Contract now requires the designation of an executive lead for net zero and an approved Carbon Reduction Plan, with progress reported annually. The UK's broader commitment to net zero by 2050 was made legally binding through the Climate Change Act 2008, as amended by the 2019 Order.

On 1 July 2022, the NHS further cemented its leadership by becoming the first health system in the world to enshrine net zero targets in law, through the Health and Care Act 2022.

The impact of climate change on mental health

Climate change has a growing impact on mental health, affecting individuals and communities both directly and indirectly. Evidence from the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Royal College of Psychiatrists, and NHS-affiliated research has highlighted the key ways in which it influences mental wellbeing:

Direct Impacts

- Extreme weather events such as floods, wildfires, and heatwaves can lead to trauma, anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder

- Displacement and loss of homes or livelihoods due to climate-related disasters can cause grief, chronic stress, and a sense of helplessness

Indirect Impacts

- Climate anxiety (also called eco-anxiety) is increasingly reported, especially among young people, due to fear about the future of the planet
- Disruption of social and economic systems, including food insecurity, job loss, and migration, can exacerbate existing mental health conditions
- Air pollution and heat exposure have been linked to increased hospital admissions for psychiatric conditions and worsening symptoms in people with existing mental illnesses

Disproportionate Effects

Vulnerable populations including children, older adults, people with pre-existing mental health conditions, and those in low-income communities, are more likely to experience severe mental health impacts from climate change.

Systemic Challenges

Mental health services are often underprepared to respond to climate-related psychological distress. A WHO survey found that only nine out of 95 countries had included mental health in their national climate strategies.

Organisational Vision

Psychiatry UK is the UK's leading provider of digital psychiatry services, working both privately and with the NHS. We provide specialist online medical services to patients with a wide range of mental health issues including ADHD, ASD, anxiety, mood disorders, depression, and more.

Our mission is to improve access to mental healthcare in the UK and be part of the solution to the mental health crisis.

Vision Statement

To lead the transformation of mental health care by delivering high-quality, accessible, and sustainable digital psychiatric services that contribute to a net zero NHS.

Key Priorities:

- Introduce sustainability into all clinical and operational decisions
- Baseline our digital infrastructure emissions by the end of 2026
- Explore green-certified suppliers and cloud providers
- Promote mental health resilience in the face of climate anxiety

Areas of Focus

1. Assurance and Governance

On 1 July 2022, the NHS became the first health system to embed net zero into legislation, through the Health and Care Act 2022. This places duties on NHS England, and all trusts, foundation trusts, and integrated care boards to contribute towards statutory emissions reductions and environmental targets.

The Act requires providers of NHS services specifically to address the UK's net zero emissions targets. It also covers measures to adapt to any current or predicted impacts of climate change identified within the 2008 Climate Change Act. We will meet these duties through the delivery of our Carbon Reduction Plan.

We have designated the Head of Corporate Governance as executive level Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) accountable for achieving net zero targets and overseeing the progress of the Carbon Reduction Plan.

We will implement a comprehensive support and oversight mechanism to ensure the successful implementation of this Carbon Reduction Plan and provide reassurance of progress reported to the board annually.

2. Workforce and System Leadership

- We will create a communication plan to promote our initiatives
- We will encourage staff to use their one volunteering day a year to undertake a 'green activity'
- We will review our training program in relation to new recruits completing a sustainability training module
- We will promote home energy improvements and low carbon goods/services to those members of our workforce who work remotely
- We will consider green staff benefits, such as planting a tree via Ecologi

3. Sustainable Models of Care

We are committed to sustainable models of care.

- All services default to remote unless clinically inappropriate, in which case patients are signposted back to GP or referring body
- Our fully digital patient journeys ensure minimal reliance on printed materials or mailed communications, lower carbon footprint from administrative processes and reduced unnecessary appointments and emissions

- We recommend low carbon interventions such as CBT and group therapy over pharmacological-only approaches where clinically appropriate

4. Digital Transformation

Being a primarily remote business, this is the largest area where we can make a sustainable difference.

Psychiatry UK are leveraging new infrastructure that benefits the organisation from a performance, cyber defense and green energy perspective.

In April 2025, we deployed Cloudflare infrastructure that protects and benefits the corporate website. Cloudflare can offer significant green benefits to our remote business by optimising digital infrastructure in an environmentally conscious way.

By leveraging Cloudflare's global content delivery network (CDN), we can access data and services more efficiently, reducing the energy consumption associated with long-distance data transmission.

Additionally, Cloudflare's edge computing capabilities minimise the need for centralised data centers, which are typically energy intensive. The company powers its network with renewable energy and is committed to sustainability initiatives, helping remote businesses lower their carbon footprint while maintaining high performance and security. This makes Cloudflare a strategic partner for organisations aiming to align their digital operations with environmental goals.

Deployment of Cloudflare has already provided a number of benefits:

Reduction in bandwidth - 70% of network bandwidth saved / reduced within 30 days.

Reduction in energy demand - 87% of the content (21.2m requests) previously served by the Psychiatry UK website is now served as cached content by CloudFlare, thus reducing the energy demand on the infrastructure hosting the website significantly.

In collaboration with the Green Web Foundation, CloudFlare infrastructure is served by 100% renewable energy. Psychiatry UK's corporate website status is green.

Looking ahead, we are introducing CloudFlare for more Psychiatry UK internet facing sites over time: The corporate website is complete, our Redash Analytics site is complete and our MedQare Portal is in progress.

As part of the Psychiatry UK Change Framework / Security by design process, all new sites are considered in terms of suitability for CloudFlare infrastructure support.

In terms of other cloud providers, we are also leveraging Amazon Web Services – this enables us to improve sustainability of remote operations by reducing reliance on physical infrastructure and minimising energy consumption.

AWS's cloud-based model allows businesses to scale resources efficiently, avoiding the environmental impact of over-provisioning and underutilised servers. With data centers increasingly powered by renewable energy, AWS supports carbon reduction goals while maintaining high performance and security.

Additionally, AWS's global reach ensures optimised data delivery, reducing latency and energy use across distributed teams. By integrating AWS into our operations, we can align digital growth with environmental responsibility.

We will continue to reduce paper forms through our transformation program, moving to e-forms, e-consent and e-prescribing wherever possible.

5. Travel and Transport

- We are primarily a remote workforce. The majority of our staff and contractors work from home
- Green travel incentives: we will soon be launching travel discounts encouraging use of public transport.
- Virtual training: over 95% of all training is delivered online

6. Estates and Facilities

We rent office space with Fora group in London and Wizu in Newcastle which support Psychiatry UK's commitment to sustainability by aligning with environmentally responsible building practices. Fora's workspaces are designed with energy efficiency in mind, incorporating features such as LED lighting, advanced insulation, and low-VOC materials that help reduce energy consumption and improve indoor air quality.

These green-certified environments not only lower operational carbon footprints but also enhance staff wellbeing through natural lighting, biophilic design, and access to green communal areas.

By choosing sustainable office providers, Psychiatry UK contributes to broader environmental goals while fostering a healthier, more productive workspace for its remote and hybrid team.

7. Medicines

- Prescribing audits: We undertake annual reviews of prescribing patterns to reduce overprescription

- Digital pharmacy integration: Our partners have accreditation via the Greener Pharmacy Toolkit, (which allows pharmacies to self-assess and earn bronze, silver, or gold accreditation)

8. Supply Chain and Procurement

- Green procurement policy: We will aim for all suppliers we work with to meet NHS Evergreen Sustainable Supplier criteria
- IT equipment: We use energy-efficient monitors wherever possible.
- Digital contracts: All contracts are signed and stored electronically

Governance

- This Carbon Reduction Plan is approved on March 25th, 2026
- Annual review: to be conducted each March by the Head of Corporate Governance
- Reporting: updates to relevant ICBs we have contracted with in accordance with the provisions of our NHS contracts

Tracking and Reporting Progress

We have estimated our annual emissions for year ending March 2026 against each of the standard carbon reduction scope areas as follows. In 2026, we will complete further work to refine these figures and take the actions outlined in this plan to achieve reduce these.

Scope 1 (direct emissions)	2,845
Scope 2 (indirect energy)	5,207
Scope 3 (travel, waste and distribution)	209,165
Total	217,216

We will seek to implement additional KPIs to demonstrate and track our commitment, including the following.

- % of consultations delivered remotely (target: maintain >95%)
- % of staff completing sustainability training (target: 100% by 2026)
- Year on year reductions in total emissions per FTE
- Reporting: Annual sustainability report published each March

Key Messages and Conclusion

Psychiatry UK is committed to delivering high-quality mental health care that is not only clinically effective but also environmentally responsible.

Our first remote model offers a unique opportunity to lead in sustainable service delivery.

We will continue to innovate, collaborate, and adapt to ensure we meet our net zero goals while supporting the mental wellbeing of our patients and staff.