Child Health and Wellbeing Network
North East and North Cumbria

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CENTRE *for* SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE
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Section 5 – A framework for Sustainable Healthcare Sustainable Child Health

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- SusQI Framework

A frame work for Sustainable Health Care

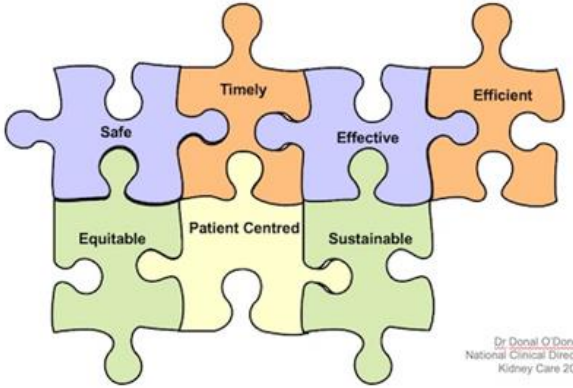
As we saw in the last section, the bulk of the emissions and other environmental impacts of healthcare are due to clinical decisions and pathways, including much of the impact of buildings, travel and energy use. This means we cannot achieve net zero if sustainability efforts are restricted to estates departments. Clinical teams must engage.

However,

1. Clinicians are highly focused on quality of care for individual patients and may have concerns that sustainable care will not be as good.
2. Many don't have time for yet another priority
3. Many don't see this as their part of their job

How can we respond to this?

We can make a strong case that sustainable healthcare delivers equivalent or higher quality care. It's not 'yet another thing to do'. It aligns well with existing agendas around efficiency, Personalised care, Social Value, tackling health inequalities and addressing prevalence of non-communicable chronic disease whilst also reducing demand on health services, providing wider social benefits, increasing capacity, cutting costs and improving staff wellbeing. It's also a unique opportunity to take part in the most exciting transformation in history. If health is our job, then tackling climate change is our job



Appeal to the core values of people working in healthcare by articulating the links between environmental and human health outlined earlier in this course. Once this is understood, taking care of the environment becomes fundamental to the mission of delivering good care to the communities we serve.

How can we respond to this?

The Royal College of Physicians has supported this integration by naming sustainability as a seventh domain of quality in healthcare, “which must run through and moderate other domains”. They say a focus on “sustainability means improving the quality of care for patients today without compromising health and care provision in the future” So what is sustainable healthcare? The Centre for Sustainable Healthcare has developed a three-pronged approach to implementing this:

- The Principles of Sustainable Healthcare
- Sustainable Value - The Triple Bottom Line
- The SusQI (Sustainable Quality Improvement) Framework
- This framework will also have applications for community and education services.

Principles of Sustainable Health Care

There are two main ways to reduce the environmental impact of healthcare. They are listed below in order of power and importance.

One Reduce activity: The most effective way to reduce the impact of healthcare is to reduce healthcare activity. The three methods to achieve this are shown in the light green boxes below:

Prevention is the most powerful lever. It includes interventions already offered, such as smoking cessation, vaccination, sexual health etc but widens the focus to include partnership approaches to address wider socio-economic and environmental determinants of health such as air pollution, access to green space, activity levels and diets. Secondary prevention activities, including screening, also contribute by reducing additional healthcare activity related to late presentation.

Patient Empowerment to take a more active role in managing their own health and health conditions.

Lean Pathways strip out low value activity. This not only reduces cost, but it also streamlines services and minimises the risk of avoidable harm from unnecessary interventions, prescribing and investigations.

Principles of Sustainable Health Care

Two Reduce Environmental Impact of activities that remain necessary:

Low Carbon Alternatives
chose the least environmentally damaging option that is also clinically effective

Operational Resource Use – minimise impact by using our resources (energy, transport, consumables etc) efficiently and choosing the most efficient, least damaging options reduce the environmental impact

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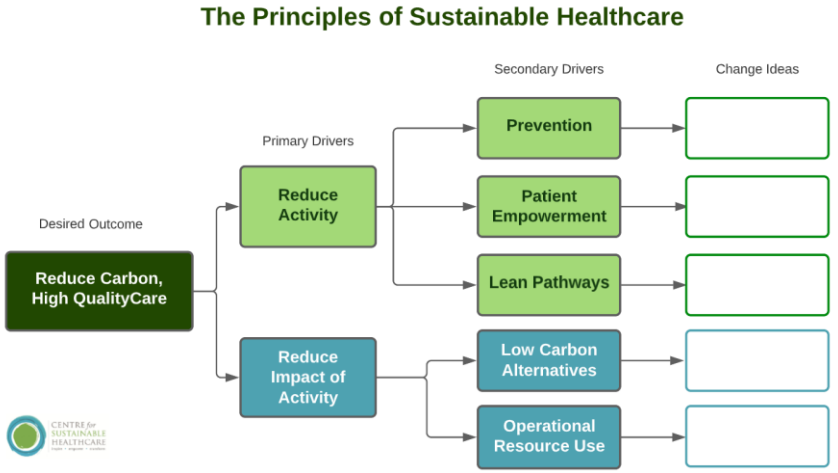
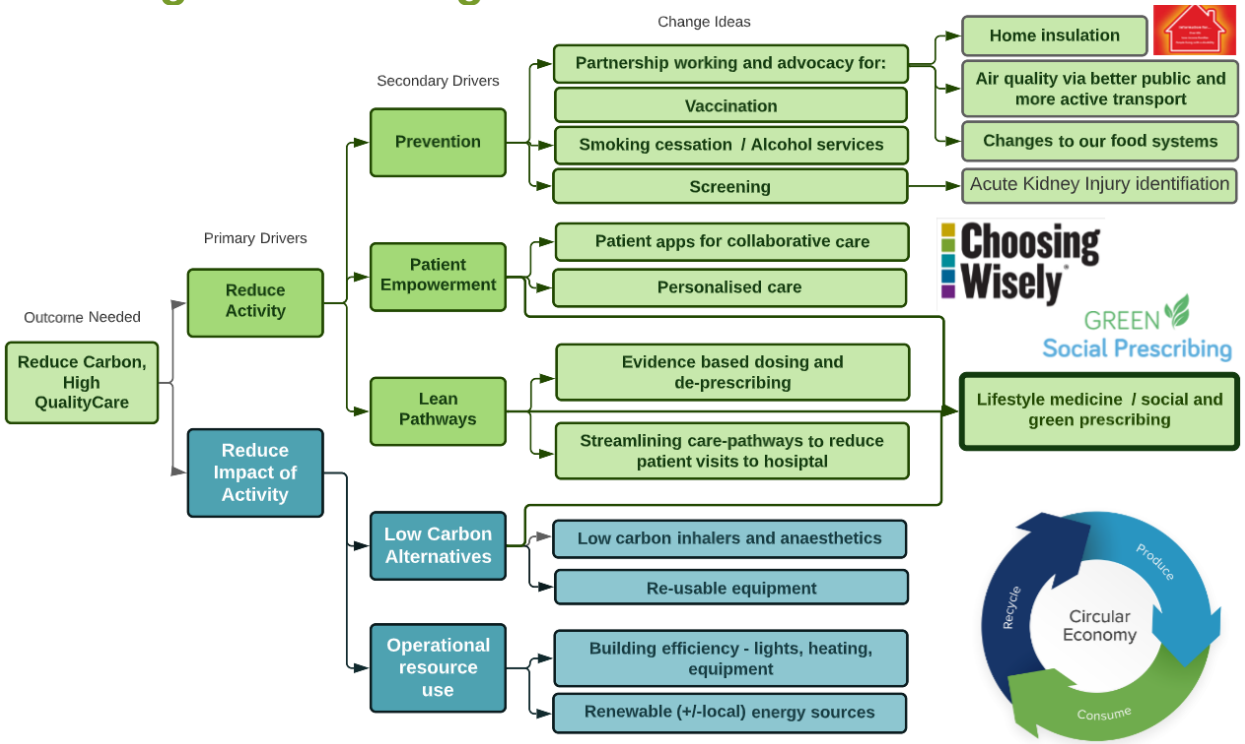
Sustainable Change Driver Diagram

A driver diagram can be used across and organisation or within a speciality or team. Whatever the level it is important to engage people who work in the system to help generate change ideas. They know how the system works and are therefore best situated to spot where changes could be made.

The driver diagram in the next slide is populated with generic ideas for sustainable change. You may be surprised to find there are things listed that you are already doing, but hadn't thought of as being sustainable. Once you start to see things through this lens you will probably think of other things you are already doing that are sustainable, and hopefully ideas for things that you could change.



Sustainable Change Driver Diagram



How can we apply these principles?

Education is an intervention for sustainability in itself. The young people of the future need to be aware of the crisis and understand how to live in balance with the ecosystems we depend on. They will need the skills to take part in a sustainable society. Educated girls also tend to have fewer, healthier children. Teachers and community workers have enormous potential to raise awareness, influence lifestyle choices (which can be both healthy and sustainable), identify and support vulnerable children and families (to avoid lifelong impacts of ACEs) and build advocacy skills.

Sustainable Value & the Triple bottom line

There are many ways to reduce the financial costs of a service. One way is to ‘externalise’ costs, in other words to pass on the cost outside the service to be carried by the wider society. here are two examples:

1. Cheap disposal of pollutants from medical procedures. A local or national body will then need to clean the air, soil, or water. The cost has disappeared from the hospital’s books but has been transferred to society.

2. Underpaying employees, creates poverty and its associated expenses for the community and the State.

In both these examples externalizing costs impacts the social and environmental determinants of health, leading to more illness and more work for hospital. So, in the end, it is an inefficient approach.

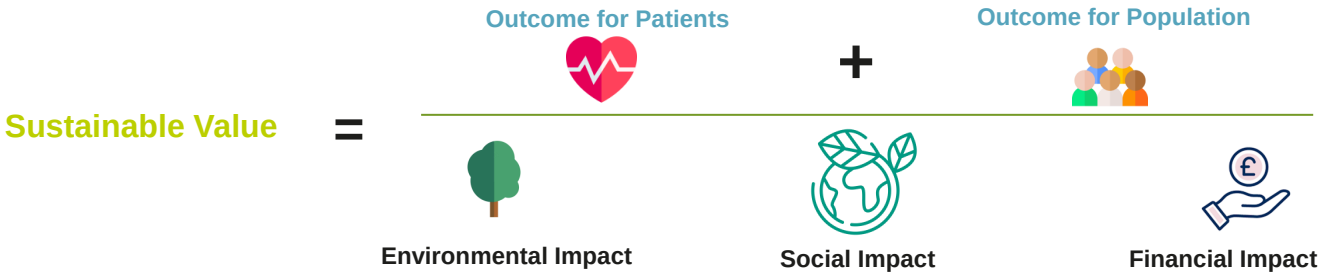
A more honest and accurate way to count the true cost of a service is to estimate its sustainable value using the ‘Triple Bottom Line’. This takes into account not just financial but also environmental, and social costs. It is a powerful way to identify resource intensive, inefficient and/or socially irresponsible aspects of healthcare.

Triple Bottom Line

The overall goal of sustainable healthcare is to maximise sustainable value. This means to deliver the best possible health outcomes with minimum financial and environmental costs, while adding positive social value at every opportunity.

This tool aligns closely to the agenda for Value-Based Care, the requirements of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2013 and helps focus efforts on tackling health inequalities.

There is no widely accepted way to compare these factors using a numerical conversion, so the equation does not need to be resolved. The approach simply ensures all these factors are considered. Measuring each of these elements can be easier said than done, but it is important to have a go – or at least discuss them!



Measuring Impacts

Population Health Outcomes - Thinking at population as well as the individual level helps to ensure that inequalities are being addressed and that everyone who would benefit from prevention or care are being reached.

Patient Health Outcomes - The relevant health outcomes will depend on the clinical pathway.

Environmental Impacts - We have already discussed measuring environmental outcomes in the Carbon Literacy (Section 3).

Financial Impacts – accounting data is usually accessible through the organisation. Indirect economic impacts are mor difficult to capture.

Social Impacts - refers to the impact on the social circumstances (e.g. housing, income, education, employment, relationships, wellbeing) of stakeholders, including:

- Patients.
- Carers and families.
- Staff.
- The wider local community.
- Distant communities (e.g. supply chain workers).

The relevant impacts will depend on the context. These can be less easy to quantify, but it is important to at least discuss them as this can avoid negative unintended consequences.

Measuring Impacts

Try to bring as many diverse voices to the table as possible to ensure you consider everyone likely to be affected by your change, including vulnerable groups:

Frail Elderly	Women	BAME	Low Income / Unemployed	Neurodiversity	Limited Mobility	Chronic Illness
Children	LGBTQ	Refugees / Asylum Seekers	Homeless / Insecure Housing	Mental Illness	Sensory Impairment	Substance misuse

Measuring Impacts

One example of social impacts is the time taken for patients and their carers to attend multiple healthcare appointments. Is this taking them out of school? Impacting their employability? Does this cause strain on relationships?

Social impact is often measured using surveys (e.g. SurveyMonkey or equivalent online tools). Things you might want to survey could include:

Patient /Carer impacts e.g.

- Time off school or away from employment.
- Cost, type of and time required for travel and healthcare appointments.
- Mental wellbeing impacts – stress, depression, anxiety, relationship impacts.
- Acceptability of the intervention.

Staff impacts - e.g.

Impacts on time, capacity, job satisfaction, acceptability of the intervention, wellbeing, organisational change:

- Is there a sustainability champion?
- Is it on the agenda in meetings?
- Is it mentioned in policy documents, job descriptions, personal development plans and appraisal?

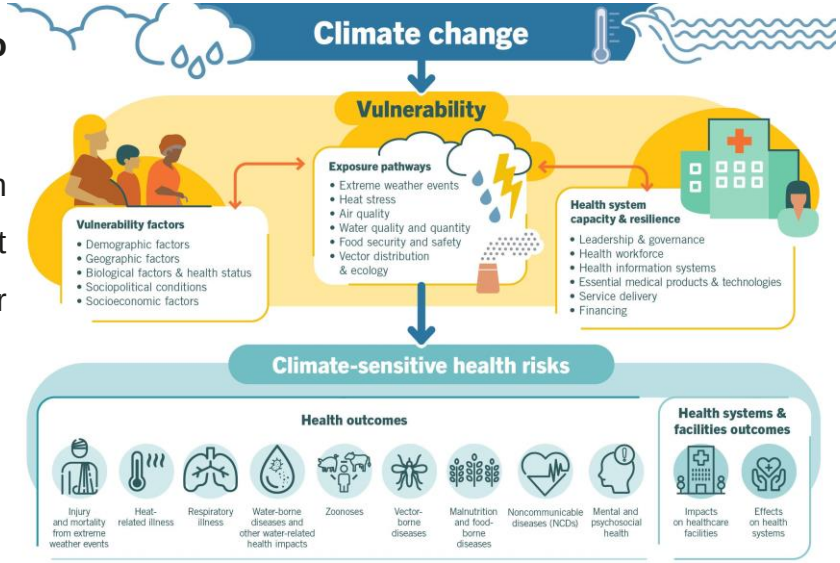
Applying Sustainable Values

How can we apply the sustainable value equation to education and community settings?

The triple bottom line approach did not start in health care. It can be applied to any business or organisation. In place of patient outcomes you can substitute relevant outcomes for your organisation such as education outcomes (not just grades!).

Discussion:

Can you think of any ways in which services your team offers may lead to positive or negative social impacts?



Sustainability in Quality Improvement

The SusQI Framework

This 11 minute video gives an overview of the principles of sustainable healthcare and sustainability in quality improvement.

Building on existing frameworks for quality improvement (e.g. PDSA – Plan Do Study ACT) and tools (e.g. process mapping), SusQI incorporates sustainability based on the triple bottom line approach. SusQI comprises four elements:

The SusQI Website

Access free resources and step-by-step guidance for setting up a SusQI project here.

Examples in practice:

How do SusQI projects and Triple Bottom Line calculations look in practice? CSH Green Ward projects work with clinical teams to plan, implement and assess SusQI projects. These projects have saved an average of £6 for every £1 spent. Explore a range of projects in different healthcare settings in the Impact Reports & Case Studies section of the Green Ward webpage.

How to Embed SusQI in to your organisation

Further training in SusQI:

If you'd like more training to support you in setting up your own SusQI project consider booking on to our Sustainability in Quality Improvement | Centre for Sustainable Healthcare. Or want more help to measure the carbon footprint of your project book on the Carbon Footprinting for Healthcare | Centre for Sustainable Healthcare.

Embedding SusQI in your organisation

If we are to achieve net zero, all quality improvement projects need to be SusQi projects. This requires Qi teams across the NHS to be trained in this approach. If you complete the Sustainability in Quality Improvement course you can take the Teaching Sustainable Quality Improvement so you can train others in your organisation. For additional support in embedding SusQI sign up to join the SusQI Academy giving you access to both courses, additional mentoring and a national SusQI forum.

Organisations which have embedded SusQI can achieve SusQI Beacon Site status.

Discussion - What ideas do you have for a sustainable quality improvement project in your area?