

Green Leadership: Empowering Foundation Doctors to Drive Sustainable Change in Healthcare



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Introduction

The NHS is responsible for 4–5% of the UK's carbon footprint and has committed to reducing emissions through the NHS Net Zero Plan. Foundation doctors are well placed to support sustainable healthcare through everyday clinical decisions and quality improvement projects (QIPs), but many lack awareness of practical actions.

We developed a Green Guide for Foundation Doctors to provide a practical introduction to sustainable healthcare. The guide includes information on the NHS Net Zero Plan, sustainable QIP ideas, and more environmentally sustainable prescribing choices. Following positive feedback from trainees, a second edition was produced incorporating user feedback and additional practical resources.

Aims

- Increase foundation doctors' knowledge of the impact of climate change on the healthcare system, and vice versa.
- Increase foundation doctors' awareness of NHS Green Plans, and how these are being actioned on a Trust level.
- Inspire foundation doctors to adapt their clinical practice and personal actions to encourage and promote environmental sustainability.

Methods



Target audience: Doctors within North West of England Foundation School.



Data collection: Qualitative survey exploring foundation doctors' understanding of sustainability within healthcare.



Guide development: Generation and publication of online 'sustainability in healthcare' resource, accessible to all foundation doctors across North West region.



Review: Re-surveying doctors to assess improvement in knowledge and awareness of healthcare sustainability.

Key Improvements

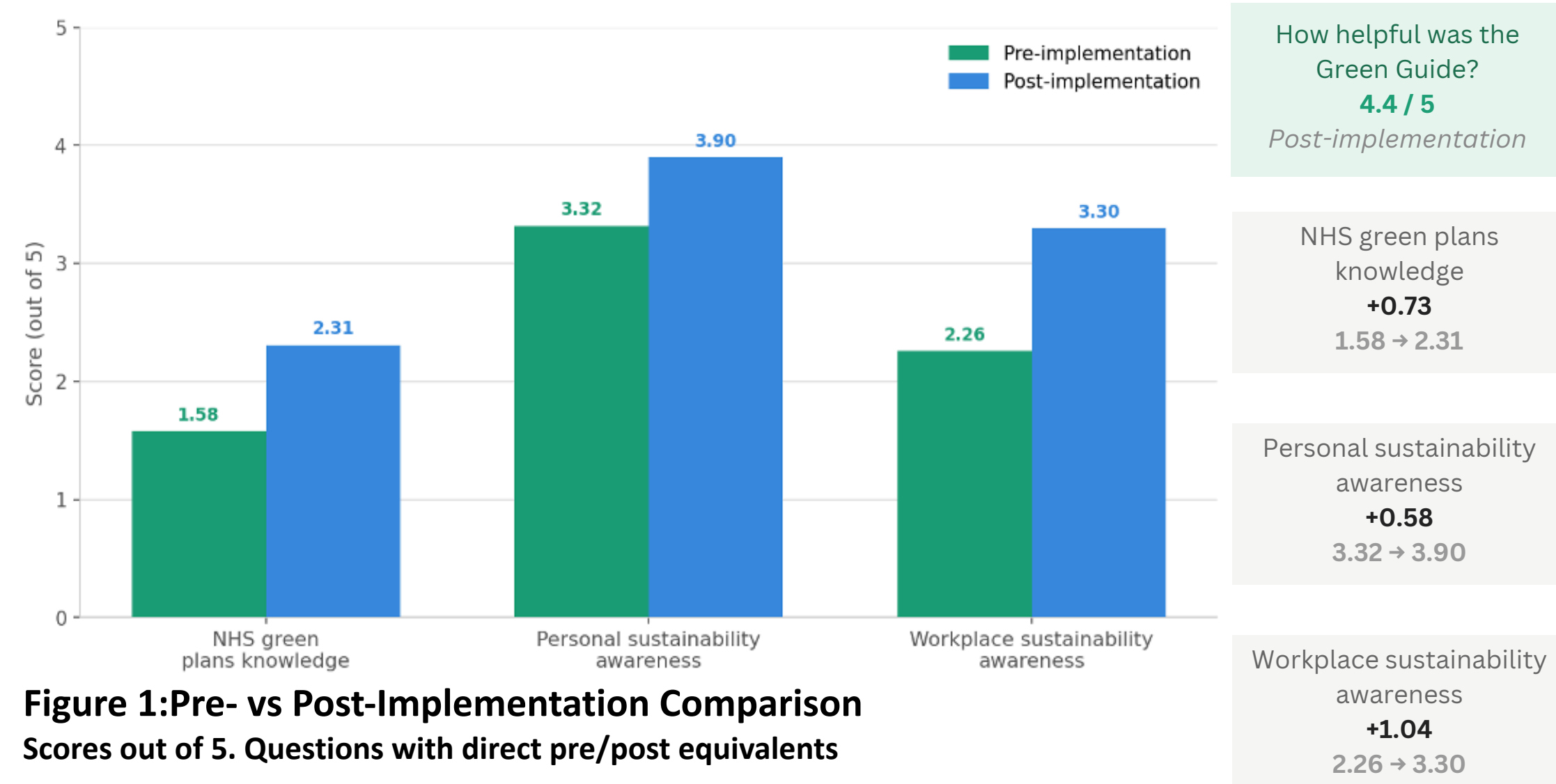


Figure 1: Pre- vs Post-Implementation Comparison
Scores out of 5. Questions with direct pre/post equivalents

Additional Findings (Pre-Implementation Baseline)

Thinks about climate change 3.1/5 Pre-implementation	Talks about climate change 1.9/5 Pre-implementation	Aware of green schemes in trust 1.7/5 Pre-implementation	Implements sustainability at work 2.4/5 Pre-implementation
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Conclusions

Strengths:

- + Provides practical Quality Improvement Project (QIP) ideas that doctors can implement across NHS trusts to support healthcare sustainability. As foundation doctors are required to complete a QIP for their e-portfolios, this offers a mutually beneficial opportunity to align training requirements with sustainability goals.
- + Summarises key information from NHS England Green Plans and directs users to further resources on trust-specific sustainability initiatives, helping to increase awareness and encourage engagement with environmental initiatives across the NHS.
- + Easily accessible via a QR code, enabling quick access to guidance, resources and project ideas.

Limitations:

- Proposed initiatives are restricted to those which are feasible within current NHS budget constraints, and must remain aligned with existing clinical and organisational guidelines.
- Currently only implemented within the North West region; however, future aims include national expansion and replication of successful projects across multiple trusts. This includes repeating initiatives such as the IV paracetamol prescribing project to generate broader datasets.
- Implementing change within a large, complex organisation can be challenging, particularly where established practices have been in place for many years. Additionally, engagement may be limited where sustainability initiatives are not perceived to have direct individual impact.

Overall: The Green Guide provides a practical and accessible resource to help foundation doctors incorporate sustainability into everyday clinical practice. The development of a second edition demonstrates continued interest and highlights the value of trainee-led initiatives in supporting the NHS's sustainability goals.

Ideas for QIPs



IV vs Oral Paracetamol: Promoting switch from IV to oral paracetamol, supporting environmental and financial sustainability, and favouring patient suitability.



Reducing Inappropriate Investigations: Reducing unnecessary blood tests and imaging, promoting environmental and financial sustainability.



Meat-Free Mondays: Encouraging hospitals to offer (and doctors to eat) only vegetarian meals one day per week, to support healthy eating and environmental sustainability.

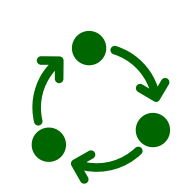


Sustainable Travel: Encouraging foundation doctors to utilise more sustainable transport options to work, including public transport, car-sharing programmes and cycle to work schemes.

Plans for future



Educating Colleagues: Using protected teaching time, and posters within healthcare settings, to inform colleagues of simple changes to promote sustainable practice.



Incorporating Feedback: Using foundation doctor feedback from the first cycle to continue to update The Green Guide.

Download The Green Guide:

