



# Toolkit 2023

Achieving a healthier community and healthier planet together

A Green & Healthy Future for Frome is a partnership made up of the following:



Funded by:



# Guide to this toolkit

This toolkit is intended for use by people who want to take action on climate and health including: healthcare professionals, local authorities, social enterprises and community organisers. It aims to share learning for anyone looking to adapt the Green & Healthy Future for Frome model in their own communities.

A Green & Healthy Future for Frome wants to achieve a health and climate win-win by exploring ways to help local people make changes which are good for their health and the planet's health. This community-led initiative is based on the fact that these issues are firmly linked – if we improve one, we'll also improve the other, enabling everyone to share in a healthier, fairer and more sustainable future.

The programme is a partnership between **Adventure: Frome, Frome Medical Practice, Frome Town Council** and our local community. Our programme is made possible by the **Climate Action Fund** through **The National Lottery Community Fund**.

This toolkit is part of a series of six and tells the story of one project strand: **Choosing Wisely**. The full series is:

- Future Shed
- Cycle Together
- **Choosing Wisely**
- Green Community Connectors
- Storytelling
- Healthy Homes



## Inside

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This Choosing Wisely Toolkit was written by Helen Kingston, Charlotte Carson and Hannah Burd, Project Manager (until February 2022) from the Green & Healthy Future for Frome project. Thank you to the GHFF Evaluators Veronica Wignall (until April 2022) and Owen King. All photos by Helen Kingston and Sue Palmer.

**This toolkit was completed in February 2023. An earlier working version was published in July 2022.**

## In brief Choosing Wisely

## Why?

Each positive lifestyle change and the targeting of resources wisely has both a direct impact now and locks in better outcomes for the future

The health and care system in England is responsible for 25% of the UK's public sector emissions.

Changes in lifestyle will have a positive impact on not just health but also the climate.

## How?

Frome Medical Practice are working with their patients to achieve changes via a multi-stranded approach

**Supporting patients to switch or reduce medications**

**Healthy lifestyle advice and alternatives to medication**

**Making Every Contact Count**

System changes involving the whole practice team

## Outcomes & Insights

**Reducing carbon impact of medication use**  
 Mean carbon impact per salbutamol inhaler fell from 5,466 kg CO<sub>2</sub>e in Oct 22

**Reducing impact of testing**  
 228 blood tests taken in Jan 22 on behalf of local hospital, saving 5,016 car miles

↓5,016 miles

**Reducing the impact of hospital admissions**  
 219 hospital admissions lower than average per year through holistic co-ordinated care

**Improving patients and staff understanding about health and the climate cobenefits**  
 Improving patient care and helping staff to make a difference

↓219 **H**

How can we enable everyone to look after their health?

## Checklist

- Understand our carbon footprint as a practice
- Build a broad based team
- Understand barriers and concerns
- Measure and review progress using quality improvement techniques.
- Celebrate progress and feed back success

# What is Choosing Wisely?

Through promoting greener and healthier lives we can improve health and wellbeing, improve financial cost the NHS and to individuals and reduce our climate impact for our future and that of our planet.

Through Choosing Wisely we...

- Empower patients to improve their health in low carbon ways.
- Offer greener lifestyle options as a treatment for appropriate health issues, thus reducing progression onto medication by helping to restore health.
- Enable patients to make informed choices about the medications they are taking.
- Explaining where greener options exist (for example, some asthma inhalers have much lower impact on the environment than others).
- Ensure better co-ordination of testing for chronic health conditions and drug monitoring to minimise climate impact of necessary monitoring.
- Discover and develop understanding of the tools to measure what we are doing.
- Find ways to embed the triple bottom line into how we evaluate and reach all decisions as a practice.

This initiative was developed by Frome Medical Practice, building on the global Choosing Wisely movement.

## The triple bottom line

Financial costs to the NHS  
and individuals

Carbon costs to our  
planet and us all

Societal costs and benefits for our  
population and our staff through  
wellbeing promotion

# Why did we set Choosing Wisely up?

The health and care system in England is responsible for at least 4% of the country's carbon footprint and 25% of the UK's public sector emissions – greater than the annual emissions from all passenger aircraft departing from Heathrow airport.<sup>1</sup> Frome Medical Practice sees the climate emergency as a health emergency<sup>2</sup> and seeks to give it the same priority as other health emergencies.

A quarter of the NHS's total carbon footprint is related to medications,<sup>3</sup> and in primary care, prescription medications are the largest contributor towards climate change. We try to focus on ways to support health which do not rely on medications. Where medication is needed we try to support staff and patients to be aware of low carbon options where this is appropriate for the individual's care. We also try to reduce the impact of wasted medications.

Across the wider NHS, major sources of emissions include the NHS estate (15% of the NHS' total carbon emissions), with primary care producing 167 ktCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2019 (roughly equivalent to double the annual emissions of the Cook Islands in the South Pacific). Road travel and transport contributes a roughly similar proportion to the NHS carbon footprint (14%) and the supply of medicines, medical equipment and all other parts of the supply chain make the remaining two thirds of the NHS' total footprint.<sup>4</sup>

Decarbonisation drives are underway across many of these contributing sources, but the most effective way of reducing emissions across the sector will be to prevent the demand for health services in the first place - through improving the health of the lifestyles of people everywhere. Prevention and lifestyle change are therefore also fundamental to Frome Medical Practice's approach.

Doctors and nurses are amongst the most trusted people in any community<sup>5</sup> and health issues can be a key factor that motivate people to change their lifestyles. These changes in turn will have a positive impact on the climate, for example swapping cars for active transport, eating a more plant-based diet, and reducing the overall burden of disease.

At an individual level, many of us aspire to lead healthier and sustainable lives, but making change can be hard. There are points of contact when we take time to stop and focus on our health such as when we have an acute illness or an annual review of existing problems. By embedding healthy and sustainable lifestyles advice into these key teachable moments we can support patients to take steps towards being more sustainable. Easily accessible information about what is available to support change locally and of the benefits of doing so can help to motivate acting now.<sup>6</sup>

Each change builds momentum and whilst there is no one simple fix, the cumulative impact of each positive lifestyle change and of targeting use of resources wisely both has a direct impact now and locks in better outcomes for the future.



**25%**

The health and care system in England is responsible for 25% of the UK's public sector emissions. A quarter of the NHS's total carbon footprint is related to medications.

# How did we set up Choosing Wisely?

## Working with our community to support wellbeing and health

Frome Medical Practice received around £10,000 of National Lottery funding via the Green & Healthy Future Programme to protect senior clinician time to ensure that climate action was set firmly at the top of the agenda, as part of the practice's overall focus on health promotion.

This has enabled a focus on healthy lifestyles and greener choices to become core to the practice's overall work to improve healthy outcomes. An enabling and healthy environment in our town is a key enabler too. Both are central to our community approach as a practice and as a town.

The approach we have taken is multi-stranded, and the staffing resource to deliver this came from many more sources than that covered by the Green & Healthy Future programme; however, the Lottery funding has been a significant enabler for our work. Below we summarise the major workstreams where the increased emphasis is gaining momentum:

- **Supporting patients to switch or reduce medications:** wherever a greener alternative exists or where healthier lifestyles would have an equally beneficial effect. The practice has prioritised a number of widely prescribed medications for medication reviews, including inhalers, antidepressants, painkillers to name a few and those where additional benefits of medication may be weaker.
- **Healthy lifestyle advice and alternatives to medication:** we have now appointed a Lifestyle Care Coordinator to scale up our raising of patient awareness of the importance of strong supportive relationships to health and wellbeing and to promote and support green and healthy lifestyles.
- **System changes involving the whole practice team:** embedding these approaches in practice medication review templates for clinicians, to prompt discussions with patients and ensuring that pharmacy technicians engaged to support patients to switch medications are well equipped with resources.



**£10,000**

Frome Medical Practice received around £10,000 of National Lottery funding via the Green & Healthy Future Programme

## How did we set up Choosing Wisely?

### Supporting patients to switch or reduce medications

This section describes where specific, large groups of patients have been supported to switch to greener medications or reduce their medication intake altogether, especially where medications do not have great efficacy. This scaled up approach has been possible by the recruitment of a pharmacist for a session a week. This team member maintains a sharp focus on this work. This additional clinical time has helped scale up our impact.

#### Inhalers

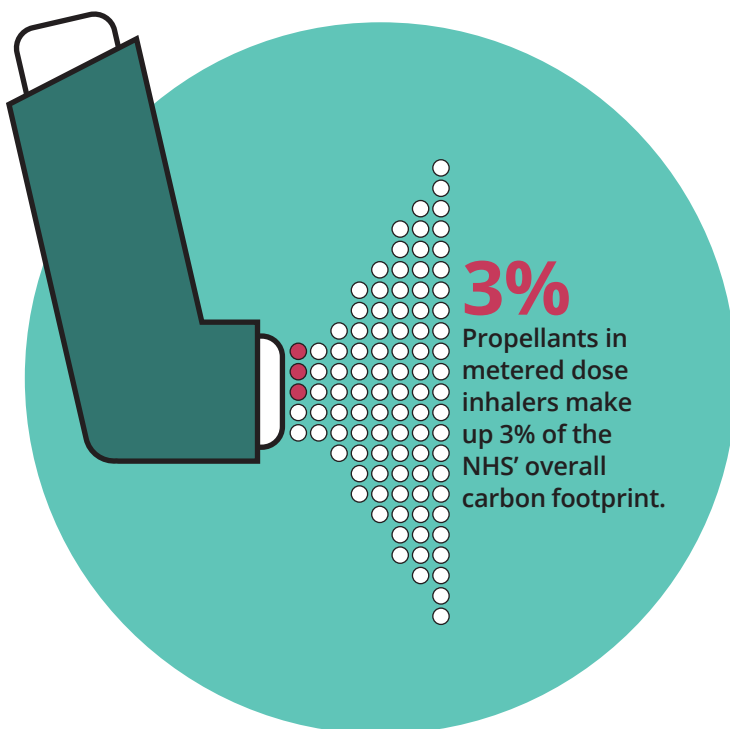
Propellants in metered dose inhalers (MDI) make up 3% of the NHS' overall carbon footprint.<sup>7</sup> The practice started their drive to support patients to switch medications here. The practice's asthma nurse and pharmacist team worked to make sure that regular monitoring checks are used to communicate the impact of inhaler choices and support sharing of information. The team is proactive in supporting patients who are able to switch to inhalers that are less harmful to the planet.

Ensuring that patients understand when to use short-acting beta-agonist (SABA) inhalers in order to control respiratory conditions as well as possible is equally important. This can help ensure that use is appropriate and is key to reducing related admissions.

#### Antidepressants

Some patients on long term antidepressants may struggle with concerns of withdrawal side effects, or may not be confident of when or how to taper medication.

The practice's team of mental health nurse practitioners and the same pharmacy technician as above worked with patients identified as suitable for this approach ensuring they were aware of community sources of support and strategies to manage their wellbeing through healthy lifestyles. This is inline with recent draft updates to guidance from NICE.<sup>8</sup> At regular medication reviews the practice team identified those patients who have been taking long term medication. They reach out to patients who have been taking antidepressants and review where antidepressants are no longer needed. They can then support tapering and stopping unnecessary prescriptions. Further resources were also commissioned to feature on the [Health Connections Mendip](#) website.



## How did we set up Choosing Wisely?

### Painkillers

Painkillers (opioids and gabapentinoids) are useful for acute or palliative pain. However, they are potentially addictive and in chronic pain their use is no longer recommended.<sup>9</sup> Holistic management focusing on a pain management approach incorporating physical activity, psychological support and pacing using approaches such as the [10 footsteps program](#) are recommended instead.

Frome Medical Practice worked with medical students from the Centre for Sustainable Health Care and with interested practice team members including registrars undertaking quality improvement projects to create patient resources and invitation letters for patients on opioids and gabapentinoids. Patients then attended medicine reviews where many were enabled to take steps to reduce their use of these medications.

### Expanding the approach

A similar approach was taken to reducing over-medication and empowering patients to make better informed and low carbon health decisions in the following areas:

- Reducing **polypharmacy** amongst more frail elderly patients via timely medication reviews
- Improving our **systems for review** of regular medications within the practice and scaling up opportunities for review with patients who may no longer need some of their medications
- Encouraging healthy lifestyle changes for **hypertension, primary prevention of heart disease and strokes and prediabetes.**
- Reviewing those taking **ezetimibe** for primary prevention and older patients with multiple medications on statins where the ongoing benefits and overall balance of polypharmacy burden needed individual shared decision making.
- Looking at opportunities to support community to **reduce their travel** through local services
- Embedding **carbon measurement** into practice approach.

In each of these areas, GP Registrars undertook a Quality Improvement project in which they supported patients to make appropriate changes. Ultimately, Frome Medical Practice seeks to make low-consumption, health-promoting and greener choices the default approach in all their activities.



Left: The Ten Footsteps program

## How did we set up Choosing Wisely?

### Healthy lifestyle advice, green choices and alternatives to medication

The practice is seeking to make it easy for patients to take preventative, healthy and environmentally friendly actions, rather than becoming more unhealthy and requiring medication. There are a number of ways that the practice does this.

#### Healthy lifestyle clinics

The practice offers regular group clinics focused on healthy diets and healthy sleep habits where patients are supported to take proactive measures to improve their health and wellbeing.

#### Links to lifestyle resources

The practice adds to a library of over 100 healthy lifestyle resources on an ongoing basis so that patients can always be signposted to information that may enable them to achieve better health and wellbeing.

[Resource / Information Centre | Health Connections Mendip](#)

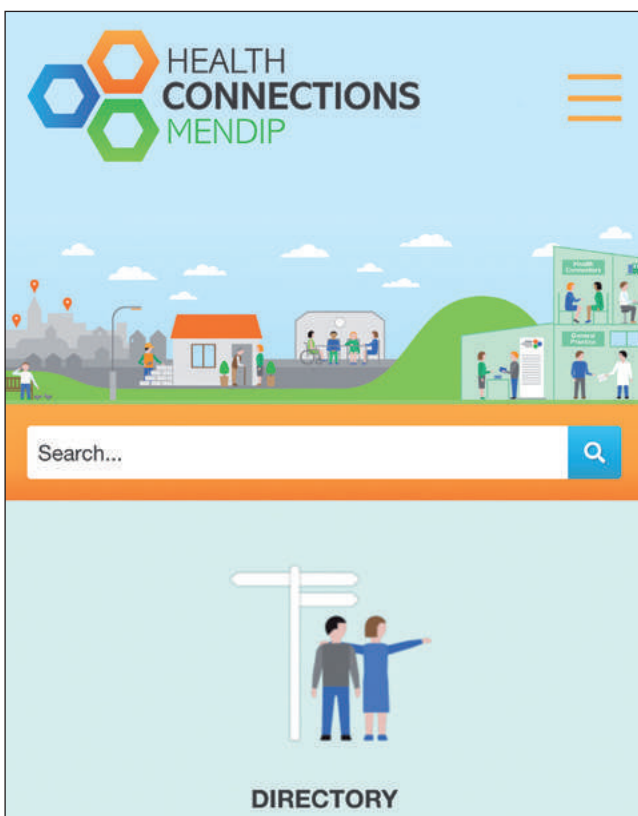
#### Social and green prescribing

The medical practice's clinical staff (including The Hub and Home Visiting team), Health Connections Mendip team and Care Navigators signpost patients to a directory of over 400 local activities groups and resources in the community that improve health, maximising both participation and impact.

To enable this approach to work, the practice also created a new section of their existing [directory](#) of community-led offerings to enable people to improve the health of their lifestyles, with a specific focus on activities that are also good for the climate and environment. Examples include:

- Links to local e-bike rentals
- A Green Gym
- Volunteer gardening and vegetable growing days
- Connecting people with dementia to nature and wildlife
- Support to improve the warmth and energy efficiency of their home
- Individual and group exercise groups

[The Green/Nature/Environment section of the Directory | Health Connections Mendip](#)



Left: Health Connections Mendip website

**How did we set up Choosing Wisely?**

## System changes involving the whole practice team

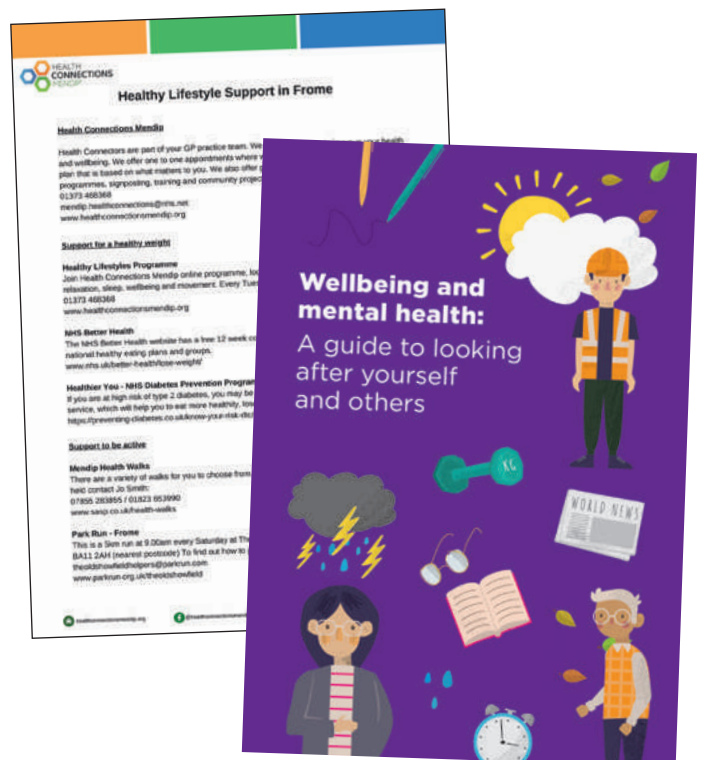
The Practice is committed to making every contact with patients count. Chronic disease recall letters and texts have been redrafted so that each of these opportunities is used to promote lifestyle approaches. Additionally, they have developed a suite of text messages (using the AccuRx system) linking to healthy lifestyle advice and [leaflets](#) hosted on the practice's Health Connections Mendip website.

### We were able to align our work to other targets set for the practice.

- New PCN DES (contractual) requirements now provide targets for greener inhaler prescribing and increased proactive cardiovascular risk identification and management.
- The new Obesity DES contract for primary care encourages practices to identify and support those with obesity.
- Local initiatives in Somerset asked us to refer prediabetics to the diabetes prevention program.
- By supporting these workstreams we had the opportunity to embed healthy lifestyles advice into our responses and reach out to patients.
- During pandemic waves we were also able to promote these approaches across our population to help combat the impact of lockdowns on population wellbeing.

### Learning and gaining energy from the community of enthusiasts nationally.

- We have been able to share our ideals and learnt much from other areas. The wellbeing booklet was shared and adapted from one produced in Cumbria. The tool for calculating mileage was shared with us by Dr Tom Lewis in North Devon. The Bristol and Bath Greener practice group and RCGP overdiagnosis and optimal testing groups have supported our work and provided fresh ideas.
- We have learnt much from the RCGP green impact toolkit and Dr Matt Sawyer. We have learnt from approaches to those on dosette boxes shared Dr Deborah Gompertz and had invaluable support from our local geriatrician Dr Helen Milbourn in supporting our care of those with frailty. Being part of the Climate action fund continues to provide us with support and ideas for further progress.



**Right: Healthy Lifestyle Support in Frome leaflet and Wellbeing and Mental Health booklet**

# What key ingredients allowed us to set up Choosing Wisely here?

Many factors enabled Frome Medical Practice to achieve change in these areas in the first year of the Green & Healthy Future for Frome programme:

## Frome Medical Practice is a large GP practice

With over 140 staff, this practice has the scale, strong infrastructure and systems to work strategically to tackle some of the core determinants of health.

## Practice-wide support for sustainability

There is support across the practice for integrating a green approach throughout their systems. The Practice Manager and Senior GPs are all aligned behind the aims. This ethos is embraced across the whole of the practice team. “[Sustainability](#)” is one of Frome Medical Practice’s 3 core values (alongside “Learning” and “Responsibility”).

## A broad based team approach

We recognised the importance of winning hearts and minds within our staff as well as our population. To scale change we need a broad support and understanding across all staff groups

Having a large engaged team that comprises many different staff roles and empowering many individuals to lead different strands has ensured that we maintain momentum.

We are honest about the time challenges, the competing priorities, cultural barriers and complexity. We seek an open discussion and whole team engagement to overcome these challenges.

## A history of concerted effort

GPs from the practice were instrumental in developing the [Green Impact for Health Toolkit](#) for the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP), has a [Policy for Green impact](#) and has won the [NUS RCGP Green Impact Award](#) four times (the first in the country to win gold in 2019). The practice has been seen as a pioneer in greener general practice for some years and declared a Climate Emergency in March 2020.

## Many projects working towards the same goal

In this toolkit we discuss the impact of The National Lottery’s Climate Action Fund in enabling a concerted focus on new activities to reduce the practice’s impact on the climate, but this funding did not operate in isolation. Many of the practice’s approaches here were informed by other recent pilots and projects that shared similar aims and impacts. Together, these many projects have created headspace, momentum and a culture around sustainable approaches that enable the changes to really take root.

## Key ingredients

### Quality improvement

Perfect is the enemy of good.

We have embedded quality improvement approaches into our practice. By ensuring we trial our approaches at small scale and learn and adapt our practice we have been able to find new approaches that work for us and our patients. This allows us to scale up our approaches. It allows us to act now and learn from doing rather than delaying whilst we wait for that perfect solution to be offered to us.

Setting up systems that support staff rather than hinder them in their role and sharing positive impacts can help build momentum and engagement.

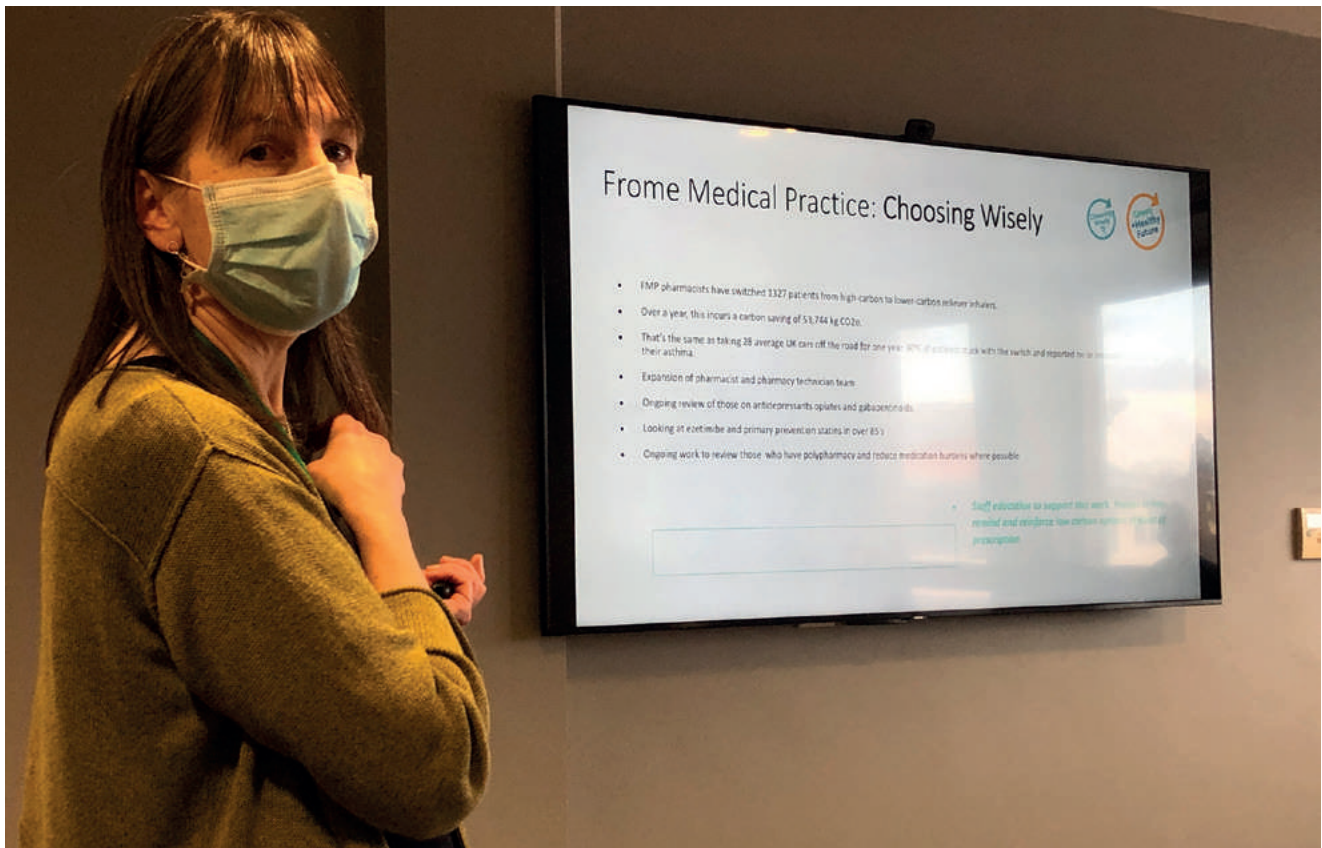
Positive patient stories including positive staff stories are a key method of winning hearts and minds.

### An established social prescribing and care navigation team

Frome Medical Practice has also pioneered embedding a team of 10 ([Health Connections Mendip](#)) over the last decade that empowers patients as members of their local community to make the most of community support, activities and resources to improve their health. This team directly supports patients via one-to-one and peer support groups to navigate their care and community-support options. They've also established and maintain a detailed local directory of groups and resources that enable people to connect to activities that will support their health and wellbeing.

### Aligning with overlapping priorities

Through finding shared objectives across groups and across different contractual demands we can build support for this approach and scale up our green impact through these new channels.



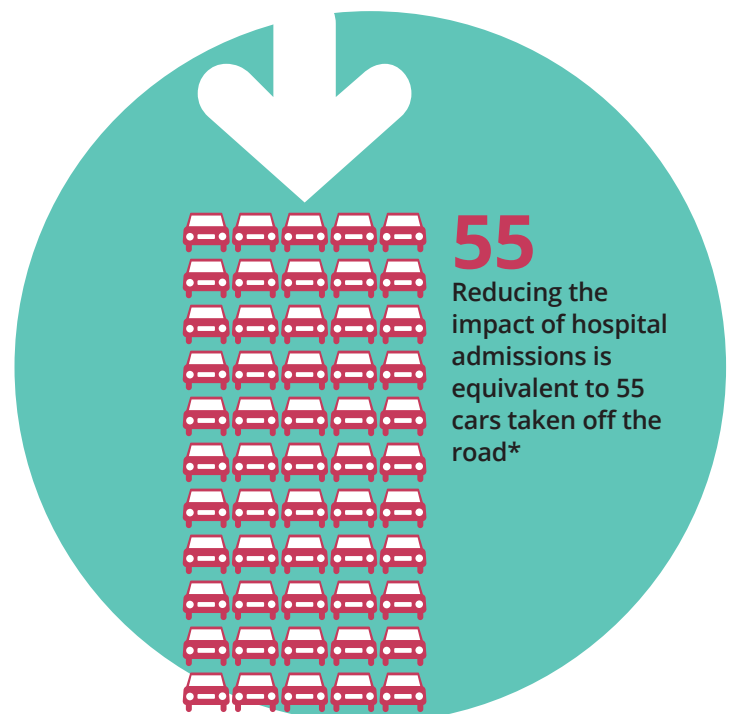
# Outcomes & insights

## Reducing the impact of testing

- Promotion of healthy lifestyles both at population level and more targeted individual approach. Information sharing of winter support locally to all adults with 2,960 patients so far recorded as having accessed this lifestyle and community support. This year we worked with Frome Town Council to distribute the winter support leaflets to all households via the local Frome Times newspaper.
- Networking through RCGP overdiagnosis and optimal testing groups and learning has helped refine our approach to testing and shift in focus from reducing individual tests to working to ensure that travel to the surgery and consumables are minimised.
- Consider impact of patient travel on carbon footprint and measure positive changes in this.
- Working with local hospital to enable local patient testing and reduce burden of travel to outpatients in Bath. In January 228 bloods taken on behalf of the hospital saving 5,016 car miles equivalent to 60,192 miles of travel saved
- Equivalent to 8 cars taken off the road based on typical mileage of 7,400 per annum\*

## Reducing impact of hospital admissions through better patient care

- 63.7kg CO<sub>2</sub> per inpatient bed day plus 36kg impact of associated journeys. Average length of stay 7.5days in 2016/17
- One admission equivalent to 514 car miles travelled per admission
- 219 admissions lower than average per year
- Equivalent to 55 cars taken off the road\*



\*Carbon calculations: 'UK cars' equivalence working:

In 2019, the average car in the UK drove 7,400 miles (Table NTS0901, Data on vehicle mileage and occupancy, produced by Department for Transport)

An average car with unknown fuel type pollutes by 0.27596 kg CO<sub>2</sub>e per mile, or 0.17148 kg CO<sub>2</sub>e per km (BEIS conversion stats)

$0.27596 \text{ kg CO}_2 \text{ e} \times 7,400 \text{ miles} = 2042.104 \text{ kg CO}_2 \text{ e per year for one average car}$

Outcomes & insights

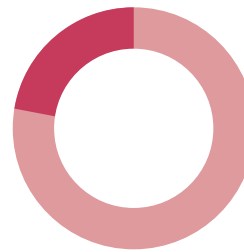
### Supporting staff wellbeing

We come to work to make a difference. This work has helped us do that. Our findings regarding staff wellbeing could be a key enabler to other areas adopting similar models of care co-ordination. There may be concerns about the additional time and workload burden for staff which creates a major barrier to implementation. However, through our regular staff survey, we find that this approach to care is helping their wellbeing.

### Better patient care

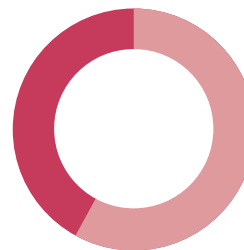
Patients stories help voice the co-benefits of these holistic approaches. They speak to our hearts in a way that statistics often cannot do.

To articulate our approach we need both hard data and the tools to measure more but also individual stories to illustrate the human benefits of working together in this way.



**78%**

In 2021, 78% of staff said they felt they were making a difference, up from 74% in 2020



**58%**

In 2021, 58% of staff said they were able to look after themselves, up from 50% in 2021

### Environmental impact of inhalers – average carbon footprint per salbutamol inhaler

For the full data, visit the [open prescribing website](#)

Environmental impact of inhalers - average carbon footprint per salbutamol inhaler [Link to chart](#)

**Why it matters:** The NHS has committed to reducing its carbon footprint by 80% by 2028 to 2032, including a shift to lower carbon inhalers.

Salbutamol metered dose inhalers (MDIs) are the single biggest source of carbon emissions from NHS medicines prescribing. The 2022-2023 PCN Investment and Impact Fund (IIF) therefore includes an indicator focusing on mean carbon emissions per salbutamol inhaler prescribed (kg CO<sub>2</sub>e). The aim is to encourage prescribing of salbutamol products associated with lower carbon emissions, resulting in a significant reduction in NHS carbon emissions.

Data on carbon emissions per salbutamol inhaler can be viewed in the [table here](#).

**Explore:**

- [Compare all practices in this CCG on this measure](#)
- [Compare all CCGs in England on this measure](#)
- [View this measure on the analyse page](#)
- [View technical details for this measure](#)

**Tagged as:** Greener NHS, NHS England Investment and Impact Fund, Respiratory

[Download data](#)

# Outcomes & insights

Working learning scaling sharing

- 1 Focus on the triple bottom line
- 2 Supporting our population to stay well and remain at home
- 3 Work to support better care in the our community and reduce preventable admissions
- 4 Provide more local care to reduce population travel
- 5 Reducing impact of inhalers and ensuring we choose wisely in prescribing all other medications
- 6 Understand and reduce the burden of testing through better co-ordination of testing regimes

## Next steps

- The current cost of living crisis is urgent and challenging. We need to ensure that we support our population with both climate and cost of living crises.
- Active travel, better insulated homes and plant based diets can help us combat the cost of living crisis as well the climate emergency whilst living healthier and greener lives.
- Our approaches need to support those who are struggling and facilitate sustainable change for us all.
- Continue to network and learn from experience of others.
- Continue to gain support from within our own team Bath and Bristol greener practice groups and RCGP special interest groups.
- Continue to look for opportunities.
- Work with strategic partners to embed the triple bottom line in commissioning and procurement as integrated care systems emerge as the new NHS structure.
- Value our community and our workforce as agents of systematic change as we work together to deliver these changes.
- Develop understanding and tools for greener procurement.
- Work with networks to identify and understand tools for measurement of impact.



Staff wellbeing garden at Frome Medical Practice

## References

Office for Health Improvement & Disparities (2022) - [Guidance: Climate and health: applying All Our Health](#)

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field\\_publication\\_file/sustainable-health-social-care-appleby-naylor-mar2012.pdf](https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/default/files/field/field_publication_file/sustainable-health-social-care-appleby-naylor-mar2012.pdf)

<sup>2</sup><https://www.fromemedicalpractice.co.uk/climate-emergency-declaration>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2020/10/delivering-a-net-zero-national-health-service.pdf>

<sup>4</sup><https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2020/10/delivering-a-net-zero-national-health-service.pdf>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/ipsos-mori-veracity-index-2020-trust-in-professions>

<sup>6</sup>[https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/making\\_the\\_change.rtv\\_.pdf](https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/making_the_change.rtv_.pdf)

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<sup>7</sup><https://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2020/10/delivering-a-net-zero-national-health-service.pdf>

<sup>8</sup><https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/GID-CGWAVE0725/documents/draft-guideline-4>

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<sup>9</sup><https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng193> Chronic pain (primary and secondary) in over 16s: assessment of all chronic pain and management of chronic primary pain, NICE guidance 7/4/21

Watch our short films to see our project in action and download our other toolkits at [www.greenhealthyfuturefrome.org/storytelling](http://www.greenhealthyfuturefrome.org/storytelling)

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