

NHS Sustainable Development Unit Case study

The NHS and the CRC

Background to NHS SDU:

The NHS Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) is recognised as an important national resource to support implementation of carbon reduction and sustainability across the NHS and has achieved cross-public sector support as well as significant international recognition. The NHS Management Board set up the unit in April 2008 to support an NHS wide approach and to set a precedent for others across the public sector and wider communities. The key achievements since its inception in April 2008 have been:

- A strong vision for the NHS leading the public sector in delivering sustainable services and reducing its impact on climate change including an NHS Carbon Reduction Strategy.
- A leading role in engaging with key stakeholders, convening groups, across the system to coordinate action, and generate materials to support implementation including a route map for a sustainable health system.
- A high quality evidence base, an emerging structure of metrics and governance, including NHS wide carbon footprints, marginal abatement cost curves and regional monitoring maps.
- Identifying and sharing examples of excellence which can support and inform others
- Providing practical support to NHS organisations complying with legal requirements, for instance in relation to the Carbon Reduction Commitment or European Union Emissions Trading Scheme sign up which saved over £16 million in avoided penalties.

NHS approach:

The NHS set up a unit to support the development of carbon reduction and wider sustainability within the NHS. The NHS has got a willingness to engage in taking carbon reduction and sustainability forward.

The NHS Carbon footprint highlights that there is a growing trajectory of carbon emissions, mostly related to the growth in demand for NHS services through an increase in the population, an increase in long term conditions and an ageing population.

The NHS SDU was involved with DECC and DH during the drafting of the CRC scheme and understood the importance of ensuring that the public sector and the private sector are involved in an incentivisation process to encourage energy efficiency and carbon reduction.

The NHS SDU wanted to ensure that the NHS engages and understands the CRC process in order to maximise the benefits and minimise the potential penalties and reputational risks to the NHS of performing poorly on carbon reduction.

Messages to the NHS:

The CRC is a corner stone to ensure the NHS and UK plc takes carbon reduction seriously.

There are more savings to be made in reducing energy bills than there is to be gained in the CRC EE tax as it currently stands with £12 per tonne of CO₂. So don't write off the tax as an extra cost but get serious about reducing your energy bills.

Trusts that make progress will be in a good position for the future – in relation to their own bills first and in relation to the NHS carbon reduction strategy, then in relation to the CRC scheme.

The NHS reputation matters so NHS SDU keen that the NHS does well in the CRC scheme – and to start with the engagement process in relation to registration and data submission.

Process:

- NHS SDU engagement in supporting the NHS to reduce carbon
- Close working with DECC and DH during the developmental stages of CRC
- Close working with EA during the registration and data gathering stages
- Process of working with regional leads to remind Trusts of the timelines and requirements
- Regular updates from EA about progress being made to enable this in a timely manner
- Learnt from the EUETS process and the benefit of working closely with the EA to ensure the NHS fulfils its requirements and hence avoids any penalties.

Results:

For both the registration process and submitting reports the NHS was ahead of the curve. For example, five days before the deadline for registrations 43% of NHS organisations were registered compared with only 25% of all registrations. Similarly for annual report submission 51% of NHS organisations had already submitted their annual report compared with 30% of all organisations.

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