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Greener Primary Care Wales Framework and Award Scheme

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)



Greener
Primary
Care Wales

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Section 1: All teams in 2025/26

1. What is the Greener Primary Care Wales Framework and Award Scheme?

The [Greener Primary Care Wales Framework and Award Scheme](#) is an environmental sustainability framework and award scheme developed for the four primary care contractors in Wales (general practice, community pharmacy, community optometry, and primary care dental). A [short 2-minute animation](#) provides an overview of the Scheme.

The framework has been aligned to the [NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan](#) and consists of over 50 actions across a broad range of categories such as waste and procurement; of which over 30 are applicable to all primary care settings and the remainder are contractor-specific. Actions cover where people work, how they work, and how they influence others with regard to environmental sustainability and climate change.

These actions are aimed at helping primary care contractors to improve the environmental sustainability of their day-to-day practice. The actions are not supposed to be time or resource draining and many are reported to be cost effective as well as good for the planet.

The framework is voluntary and is a great place to begin your sustainability journey and take steps towards creating a healthier planet. The award aspect of the Scheme corresponds to the following levels: **Working Towards**, **Bronze**, **Silver**, and **Gold**. By achieving a set number of actions (and therefore points) you will progress up the award levels – see below.

Award Level	Completed Actions
Working Towards	Registered but less than 8 actions complete
Bronze	8 Actions
Silver	17 Actions
Gold	23 Actions



2. Why do we need the Greener Primary Care Wales Framework and Award Scheme?

As a result of the Welsh Government declaring a climate emergency in April 2019, a number of key targets were set, including:

- Health and Social Care to deliver a reduction in emissions of 16% by 2025 and 34% by 2030
- A carbon-neutral public sector by 2030 and net zero emissions for all sectors by 2050

These have been supported by the [NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan \(2021\)](#).

The health sector in Wales is responsible for the largest carbon emissions in the public sector with general practices, community pharmacies, primary care dental practices, and community optometric practices having an important role in reducing health sector emissions.

In Wales, the Greener Primary Care agenda closely aligns to our legislative and policy context. The well-being goals set out in the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) will all be positively impacted by this work. It supports the sustainable development principle of the Act by taking a long-term approach, working in collaboration with stakeholders, and involving the healthcare professionals who have the ability to enact change.

Until 2022 there was no one resource, designed with Welsh primary care contractors in mind, to support all four primary care contractors to become more environmentally sustainable and to take action to support decarbonisation. At the time there were UK-wide frameworks for general practice and dentistry, however these tended to be written with English practices in mind and are only open to GPs and dental practices respectively. There was no equivalent UK wide resource for community pharmacy or optometry, however a number of profession specific UK wide toolkits are emerging. These are not necessarily tailored to a primary care audience and not Wales specific.



A bespoke framework to support all primary care contractors in Wales was therefore developed by the Primary Care Division, Public Health Wales and was launched in June 2022. This allows the actions included in the framework to be aligned to the strategic and policy context in Wales, supporting colleagues in primary care to demonstrate legislative and policy duties regarding environmental action.

3. Who can participate in the Greener Primary Care Wales Framework and Award Scheme?

The Scheme has been designed specifically for the four primary care contractor professions in Wales (general practice, community pharmacy, community optometry and primary care dental). Access to the framework and Scheme for 2025/26 is therefore restricted to the above, at present.

4. What are we asking primary care contractors to do?

We are asking contractors to [register](#) with the Scheme and start on the journey towards environmental sustainability and decarbonisation. There is no charge to join and participate.

There are ongoing discussions as to how the wider sustainability agenda may become business as usual for primary care contractors in the future. Participation in this Scheme this year may mean that contractors are more advanced in their sustainability practice if any mandatory requirement to comply with similar actions comes into force in the future.

This framework acts as a tool to support primary care in meeting the ambitious government targets for all sectors to be carbon neutral by 2050 and to demonstrate ways of meeting the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

We recognise the enormity of the challenge presented by climate change can seem daunting and that individual actions sometimes don't feel like enough, however, if we all take some action across a range of activities, then the collective impact will be much greater.



In summary, we are asking contractors to consider their personal, professional, and organisational responsibility toward tackling the climate emergency and achieving the Welsh Government’s decarbonisation milestones.

Please see the Greener Primary Care Wales [Yearbook 2022](#) to read a selection of real-life case studies from practices across Wales. There is also a selection of useful resources found [here](#) on the [Primary Care One website](#) including video case studies for [primary care dental practice](#), [community pharmacy](#), [general practice](#) and [community optometry](#).

5. What sort of activity is included as actions in the framework?

The majority of the actions within the framework are generic to any primary healthcare provider and could therefore be implemented by all independent primary care contractors e.g. changing to energy-efficient lightbulbs. However, the framework also includes a subsection of actions specific to each setting e.g. general practice, primary care dental, community optometry, and community pharmacy.

Actions have been developed based on a number of factors:

- Alignment to NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan
- Feedback from the Expert Group and other key stakeholders
- Insight from teams registered in 2024, 2023, 2022, and early pilot sites
- Support for the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 Goals and Ways of Working, Prudent Healthcare principles and the UN Sustainable Development Goals

6. How does the assessment and award process operate?

The Primary Care Division, Public Health Wales are working in partnership with the charity [Students Organising for Sustainability UK \(SOS-UK\)](#) who will manage the assessment and awards of the Scheme. They train volunteer university students to become auditors of the evidence submitted by practices. They may request to meet virtually with the practice as part of the audit process and discuss the evidence submitted, based on this they will recommend practices for the appropriate level of award.

The Scheme operates as follows:

- Practices [register](#) for free with the Scheme.
- Practices select actions they wish to work on.
- Evidence to support the completion of actions is uploaded onto the digital platform by participating practices.
- The framework will remain open for evidence submissions for two years, until the autumn of 2026.
- Once the framework closes, university students volunteering for SOS-UK will undertake auditing of the submitted evidence. These volunteers receive specific training from the charity, who provide ongoing support to students and oversee the whole process.
- Practices may be invited to attend a brief one-hour virtual meeting with the student auditors to confirm completion of the actions and clarify their evidence.
- Award levels will be based on the successful completion of actions, and therefore points e.g. 8, 17, and 23, as explained above.
- An assets pack and e-certificate will be provided to the practice upon successful completion of an award level.

Practices can therefore reach a bronze award by implementing just 8 actions.

7. What support can I expect if I register with the Scheme?

The Primary Care Division will be available to answer any questions practices have about participation in the Scheme. You can contact us by emailing greenerprimarycare@wales.nhs.uk. Similarly, SOS-UK will be happy to respond to any queries relating to the online framework tool by contacting celine.clark@sos-uk.org.

Practices participating in the Scheme will also be provided with the following:

- Support, hints, and tips in the Scheme's monthly e-bulletin.
- An invitation to attend a monthly 30-minute drop-in meeting via TEAMS with the Primary Care Division and SOS-UK to discuss any issues and/or connect with other participating practices.
- An entry into the Scheme's 'Team of the Month' award, with the winning practice having a tree planted in their name.

8. Who is involved with the Expert Group?

The Expert Group was established in October 2021 to provide advice on the design and development of the Scheme. The Group champion the Scheme and members are asked to encourage contractors to participate. The Expert Group meet approximately annually. Members are consulted and asked for advice between meetings if appropriate and necessary.

The Group is made up of a broad range of stakeholders including professional leads from Welsh Government, professional bodies in Wales, and contractor bodies. Other agencies that can offer support in enabling primary care to be more environmentally sustainable are also included as part of the group, for example, Health Education Improvement Wales and NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership. A number of clinicians are also present on the Group.

9. What about the carbon footprint of primary care?



One of the first steps primary care settings may wish to think about is to calculate their current carbon footprint to help identify ways in which they can reduce their carbon emissions.

A [review](#) of carbon calculators by the Primary Care Division, Public Health Wales identified some carbon footprint calculators suitable for use by small and medium-sized businesses/small organisations that may be most relevant for use by individual primary care practices.

Our findings indicated that there is no one, free of charge, carbon calculator that takes into account all the factors that satisfies its use across all four settings in primary care. However, each offers at least partial suitability for use by primary care settings:

- [See Sustainability GP Carbon Footprint Calculator](#)
- [The Carbon Trust Carbon Footprint Calculator](#)
- [The Climate Hero Carbon Footprint Calculator](#)

10. How do I get involved?

If you would like to get involved in the Greener Primary Care Wales Framework and Award Scheme click [here](#). The first step is to register yourself and your team; please fill in the registration form by following the link above and provide your details including your email address and a unique password.

If you are the first person joining from your practice, use the 'toolkit' page to set up a new team with a name that will be recognisable to your colleagues. Once your team is set up, it will then appear on the drop-down list on the registration page under 'Team', and other colleagues can then select to join your team when registering.

Once you have registered, you can log in to the framework using the email and password you have set up. To get started, use the 'Toolkit' page to look through the actions (called



criteria in the toolkit) listed. For each criteria, you can read its description as well as view the 'Further Information' section to understand what the criteria is and how you can complete it. You can also read the 'How you will be audited' section for specific advice on what evidence auditors will be looking for when checking you have completed this criteria.

The 'Comments & Evidence' tab associated with each action should be used to leave comments to explain how you have completed the criteria, and/or upload evidence files (e.g. emails, photos, or other document files). You do not need to upload detailed comments or evidence for every single criteria (some criteria could just be evidenced with a comment if no files are relevant), but it does greatly support the audit process.

You can 'star' favourite actions and assign actions to team members using the 'Assigned to' function below each criteria. As you make your way through completing criteria, you can mark them as 'In progress'. Once you have finished completing a criteria, click 'Done' on the right of the box and you will see a point is now added to your award progress.

A toolkit user guide is available as part of the framework to help support you in completing the criteria.

Having listened to feedback for participating teams, we have extended the online framework to be 'open' for submissions of evidence for two years until Autumn 2026. This will allow your team more time to implement climate friendly actions within your practice. A set closing date will be communicated to all registered teams for 2025/26 in due course. Please make sure all evidence and submissions are complete by the set closing date and ensure you click the 'Submit' button to complete the process. Virtual audits will be conducted sometime in the autumn of 2026 (definitive date TBC), following the closing of the framework. Depending on the number of teams participating, Teams reaching the points threshold for award levels will be invited to participate in an informal 1-hour virtual audit. Further information in relation to the auditing and awarding aspect can be found on the online framework.

Section 2: Returning teams in 2025/26

11. I registered my practice last year; do I need to register again?

No, your individual and team details will still be present on the framework.

12. Why does the Scheme close for part of the year?

For a short period of time each year the Scheme closes to allow us to undertake the audits and to review and make any changes we think will improve the framework. This allows us to update any actions and ensure the most accurate information and relevant actions are included. For 2025/26 this will be during the autumn 2026.

13. Can I carry over points from the previous years of the Scheme?

Points **do not** automatically carry over into the next year.

For the majority of actions, you will be required to upload some new evidence to demonstrate that you are continuing to implement your actions and practice sustainably. This will help you to demonstrate that they have been implemented as part of your everyday practice, rather than a one-off or 'tick-box' exercise.

There are also a limited number of actions for which we will not require new evidence, and these will be clearly highlighted in the framework. An example of an action not requiring further evidence would be replacing existing lighting with more energy-efficient options.



14. I was awarded a Bronze/Silver/Gold award last year – how do I progress and aim for a higher award level this year?

To maintain your award level, you will need to demonstrate and provide evidence that the minimum number of actions for that award is achieved during 2025/26. For this, you can choose the same actions you implemented during previous years of participating in the framework and provide evidence of ongoing and sustainable implementation. You can choose additional actions to aim for a higher award level or you can choose a whole set of different actions. The choice is yours.

Please note a small number of actions that involved significant investment during previous years and yield ongoing carbon savings such as installing solar panels, will not require further evidence to be submitted. The actions this applies to are clearly labelled on the framework.

To help practices progress to the next award level we have added some new actions which will provide some variety and further challenge you as a practice. We have also added an additional 'innovation' action to the framework which means if your practice is working on something related to sustainability that is not included in the framework, you can still gain a point.

Remember, you don't need to achieve 100% of points to achieve the gold-level award.



15. Further Information

You may have other questions about the 2025/26 Framework and Award Scheme which are not covered by our FAQs. If you require further information about the Scheme, you can speak with us by using the following channels:

- Emailing us at greenerprimarycare@wales.nhs.uk
- Attending one of our monthly drop-in sessions attended by the Public Health Wales Greener Primary Care Team and SOS-UK

If you would like to see how other practices implemented actions from the Scheme in 2022, you can view our [Yearbook](#) or [watch video case studies](#).

