



Top Tips: Making the case for greener respiratory healthcare and influencing upwards



Daryl Freeman *PCRS Executive Committee Member and*
Noel Baxter *PCRS Member*



Introduction

As of April 2021, regional health and care needs in England will be coordinated through Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/integratedcare/what-is-integrated-care/>). ICSs will bring together expertise and insights from the NHS and local councils as well as voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises. The aim of this integrated approach is to meet the health and care needs across an area by coordinating services aimed at improving health and reducing inequalities.

In Scotland, regional NHS Boards are responsible for the delivery of front line healthcare services and for the protection and improvement of population health (<https://www.scot.nhs.uk/organisations/>). In Wales, these responsibilities lie with regional Health Boards (<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-09/nhs-wales-planning-framework-2020-to-2023.pdf>) and in Northern Ireland with Local Commissioning Groups (<http://www.hscboard.hscni.net/local-commissioning-group/>).

Decisions taken by these organisations will directly affect the environmental impact of local health and care services and will be an important medium by which the environmental burden of respiratory healthcare can be reduced. In this article we bring together our top tips to help you get started with influencing local policy to raise awareness of and drive greener respiratory healthcare initiatives and to ensure that the environment is at the heart of all health and social care decision making in your local area.



PREVENTION



OUTSIDE THE
PATHWAY

TOP TIP

Tip 1: Know your local influencers

A good place to start is with the lead for respiratory healthcare in your area and by making yourself known to them. Get to know their priorities and whether greener respiratory healthcare is high on their agenda. If greener respiratory healthcare is not something on which they currently focus, this is a great place to start to make the case for the environment to be at the heart of local decision making.

Know the members of the organisation responsible for setting healthcare priorities in your area. In England this will be an ICS, in Scotland the regional NHS Board, in Wales the regional Health Board and in Northern Ireland the Local Commissioning Group.



Tip 2: Decide on your own priorities

Decide on your priorities for greener respiratory healthcare in your local area. Speak to colleagues, especially those with prior experience of local-level influencing, to help with ideas for initiatives and what might be achievable in your area. You don't need to start with a grand plan; small step changes can be just as effective and can start a movement towards placing greener decision making at the heart of all CCG-level decisions. An example of an initiative you might choose would be to ensure that low carbon alternative inhalers are available on your local formulary list.

Useful resource:

- The PCRS White Paper on Greener Respiratory Healthcare is a great place to start and has lots of ideas for small and more ambitious initiatives to improve the environmental impact of respiratory healthcare.



Tip 4: Gather your evidence

Gather evidence on how your proposal/s will improve the environmental impact of respiratory healthcare in your area. For example, if your goal is to move local inhaler use towards low carbon alternatives, speak with your local medicines optimisation team and ask whether they have local data about what devices are currently being used.

Useful resource:

- The PCRS White Paper on Greener Respiratory Healthcare includes information on the carbon footprint of the NHS in England and target areas for reducing environmental impact.
- The Centre for Sustainable Healthcare provides guidance on how commissioning groups can reduce the NHS carbon footprint.

Tip 7: Speak out

Attend the public meetings of the organisation responsible for setting local healthcare priorities and make sure you know when and how to table questions. There may be an open question session, but often questions must be submitted ahead of the meeting.



Tip 3: Align with the NHS long-term plan



Design your priorities to align with the long-term plan for respiratory healthcare. For example, you might decide that improving respiratory diagnosis is a key priority. Ensuring patients have the right diagnosis and receive the right treatment is already greener respiratory healthcare as it reduces wasted medications. You might decide to campaign for a local diagnosis and management hub staffed by appropriately trained clinicians. Such a hub could reduce travel of patients to different clinics for different tests and consultations, avoid duplication of services and improve outcomes for patients.

Useful resource:

- The PCRS Respiratory Service Framework provides a wealth of information about what a high quality respiratory service should look like including ensuring early, accurate and complete diagnosis of respiratory conditions.



Tip 5: Inform and educate

Support the organisation responsible for setting healthcare priorities in your area by giving them the clear information they need to support greener decision making. Make your case clearly and concisely – what it will cost, will there be immediate cost savings, will there be long-term cost savings, what the wider benefits to the local community will be.

Tip 6: Know the local system



Know the planning cycle of the organisation responsible for setting local healthcare priorities including when they are agreeing priorities, setting commissioning intentions and tendering.

Tip 8: Start small but be ambitious



Start small but have a plan. Once your first objective is achieved, build on the progress and relationships you've made to move forward with your next priority. Be ambitious and keep pushing for more.



The PCRS interactive respiratory pathway tool aims to help clinicians work with patients to identify a greener approach to delivering high quality, patient centred respiratory care.

<https://www.pcrs-uk.org/greener-respiratory-pathway>