Dear (medical Director)

As chair of the ICS Green Plan Clinical Advisory Group it has been inspiring to work alongside clinicians who are passionate about working towards NET zero NHS. Colleagues have contributed to the development of the ICS green plan which has just been approved at the ICS Board. We understand that clinical engagement will be key to designing low carbon pathways, sustainable procurement and improved health and well-being in the long term.

At Sherwood I have been lucky enough to have the support of the Senior Leadership Team and the Board to take forward the Climate agenda and as Lead for Climate Action have job planned time to lead this work. We have an active climate action team which includes our estates and procurement colleagues but also a wide range of clinical and non-clinical staff leading on ideas and passionate about climate action. Climate action and sustainability figure in the top 8 priorities of the Trust’s 5 year plan reflecting the weight that Board gives this.

As the ICS Green Plan Clinical Advisory Group we feel it is essential that every trust has a Clinical lead with job planned time to support the work towards a zero carbon NHS. We recommend that this individual would  provide clinical leadership alongside the established sustainability leads within existing organisational sustainability structures as this may be different across trusts. This group should report to the Executive team and contribute to decision making about new investment, pathway design etc and report back on the progress of the Green plan.  We have all published our Green Plans and co-produced the ICS Green Plan and now need to deliver on them.

You have committed individuals within your trust who are already making changes in their local departments but they need leadership and coordination to harness their energy and ideas and create a ground swell of action which will lead to the change we need. This needs formal resource and explicit time.

The war in Ukraine has amplified the focus on energy supply and has already contributed to further increases in energy costs in the UK. All trusts will be facing serious increases in energy bills and this in itself will be focusing the minds of our colleagues in finance and estates departments. But I would emphasise that it is the people who use our buildings who hold many of the keys to energy saving and will help with other carbon reduction ideas. In addition, our staff have a unique opportunity to contribute to health promotion, lower carbon lifestyles and energy saving in their own homes and families as well as their patients.

Also in the news, the International Panel on Climate Change has given a very gloomy report about the current trajectory of climate change and rising global temperatures. We must act now to mitigate the impacts on health.

All trusts will be busy with plans for the next 1-3 years. I would urge you to include real and funded resource for clinical leadership and development of formal  climate action teams to develop carbon reduction schemes, contribute to energy saving and work across the ICS to share good practice and work collectively to achieve your Trust and ICS Green Plan ambitions.

Helena Clements

Consultant paediatrician

Clinical lead for climate Action SFH.

Chair of the ICS Green Plan Clinical Advisory Group