

Looking After Our Carbon Foot (& Ankle) Print

Lets Get Digital!

'Carbon footprint', 'global warming', 'emissions', 'net zero', 'efficiency' and similar words and phrases are quickly becoming part of our everyday language, and with good reason! Every individual sharing this planet has a responsibility for it, and organisations are no different. As an NHS commissioned health service, Sussex MSK Partnership East (SMSKPE) shares the National Health Service goal of meeting 'net zero' by 2040.

Realistically, this means identifying and changing things that we may be uncomfortable changing, and naturally, this is difficult. People have practiced a certain way of doing things for a very long time! Not only do colleagues have these practices ingrained but patients have certain historical expectations, too. Letters have always been sent, for example, to confirm appointments. Letters are also sent as recounts of clinical discussions and various documents are regularly copied between providers & referrers throughout the patient journey.

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Paper materials are generally imported into the UK and made primarily from recycled materials or pulp. Even so, 3.9 million tonnes of paper and paperboard was produced in the UK in 2017. A single sheet of paper has a financial cost of about 1p. It costs 51p to send a generic second class letter by Royal Mail. Then; there's the cost of the ink, labour, machine use & upkeep, energy consumption and add up the production impact of all of these resources separately and you can only come to one conclusion: Paper is expensive! Email is free (kind of).

To address this element of the process and move towards being 'net zero', SMSKPE is 'switching to email'. Therefore our conversations with patients are changing. We are now asking for consent to add email addresses to records in order to send documents, letters and updates, by email instead of post. It is quicker, cleaner and much more efficient. Avoiding post is only one small win. Once we can communicate by email, it makes several other interactions much more efficient, too. We are finding more patients becoming comfortable with email queries than ever before and keen to go digital.



We are also able to send consenting patients links to the pre and post-care surveys, which give us invaluable information to help identify and inform future improvements and help us compare ourselves against our peers. Doing these electronically, too, prevents letters and paperwork being passed back and forth and makes it much easier to collate and use data meaningfully and safely.

What can you do?

When you speak with colleagues in our admin teams, consider giving them your consent to use email for correspondence, instead of post. If you can provide a reliable email address, one that you access regularly and are comfortable using, it will make it easier to keep in touch. This saves the NHS money, it makes it easier for us to reach out to you and it saves the planet some precious resources.

If you wish to continue receiving correspondence by post, instead, please make this known in your conversations with the team and we will record your preferences, and try not to keep asking you!



That's not all, folks!

Our focus in this article has been our aim to reduce outgoing post, but we are always looking for other ways to save and be **green!**

We were early adopters of retiring fax machines and became fax-free in 2017. We also replaced all bulbs in the office with energy efficient alternatives and delivered several workshops with the team about fostering better energy behaviours; Like not leaving computer screens on standby and using a boiler tap rather than a kettle.