

# **NHS EDUCATION FOR SCOTLAND**

## **CLIMATE EMERGENCY & SUSTAINABILITY**

### **ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024/25**

#### **1. Introduction**

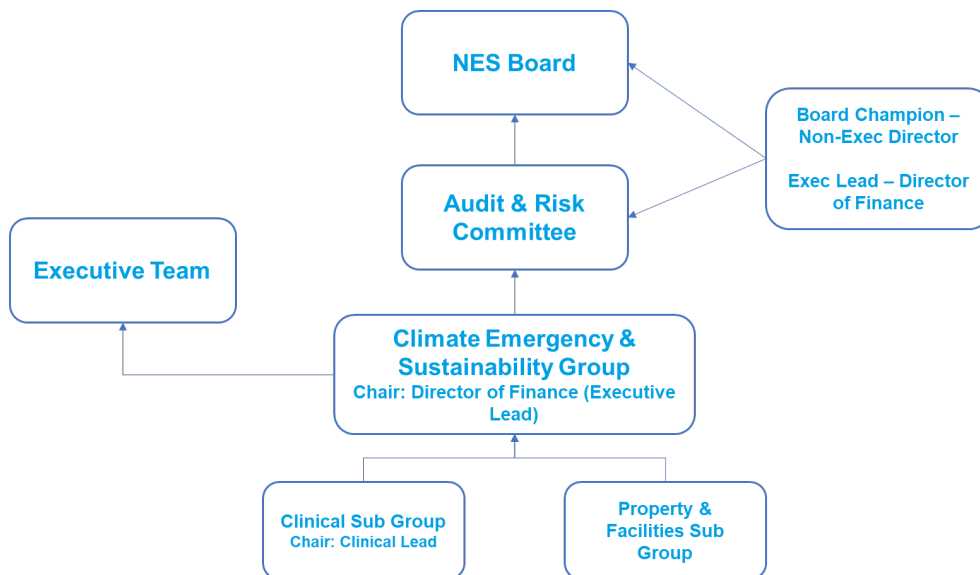
- 1.1. This is NHS Education for Scotland's (NES) annual Climate Emergency and Sustainability Report, covering the year 2024/25.
- 1.2. NES provides training and education to the entire NHS Scotland workforce and NES also supports the development of systems and data services to enhance the provision of digital healthcare in Scotland. NES is a key partner in ensuring that the Health and Social Care workforce has the right skills, in the right place, at the right time, for today and for future years.
- 1.3. In line with the wider NHS in Scotland, NES aims to become a net-zero organisation by 2045 for all our emission sources. NES does not provide direct clinical healthcare services to individuals within Scotland, we do not discharge harmful clinical gases, we only generate a very small amount of clinical waste in a limited number of training programmes, we do not operate a vehicle fleet and we operate from only a small number of premises. As a consequence, our direct carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions are very low when compared to territorial NHS Health Boards in Scotland.
- 1.4. During 2024/25 NES employed 1,629 full-time equivalent people to directly provide its services. NES also acted as lead employer for almost 7,000 doctors in training, as well as 270 dentists in training.

#### **2. Leadership and governance**

- The Sustainability Champion on the Board is Gillian Mawdsley, who is a Non-executive Director on the Board of NES
- The Executive Lead is Jim Boyle, Director of Finance, who is also an Executive Director on the Board of NES
- The committee with lead responsibility for climate change and sustainability is the Audit and Risk Committee
- NES is showing leadership in tackling climate change and becoming environmentally sustainable in a number of ways
  - Supporting continued home and hybrid working to enable staff to carry out their duties where possible without the need to commute to offices

- Where staff are required to travel, NES encourages and promotes the use of public transport and other sustainable forms of transport, such as cycling
- Implementation of employee salary sacrifice schemes to encourage the move to low-emission electric vehicles and also to facilitate the use of cycling as a means of travel to work for employees.
- We are striving to build climate emergency and sustainability considerations into our education and training activities where appropriate, and we see this as the main focus of NES' contribution to helping to meet the Scottish Government's policy on Climate Emergency and Sustainability in future years.

2.1. The NES internal governance structure for Climate Emergency and Sustainability is represented as follows:



### 3. The NES Strategy on Climate Emergency and Sustainability

3.1. In May 2024 the NES Board approved a Strategy on Climate Emergency and Sustainability, and developing this this involved input from colleagues across the entire organisation. The Strategy was considered by the Audit and Risk Committee and was then approved by the Board in May 2024. The Strategy can be found at the following link:

[NES Climate Emergency & Sustainability Strategy](#)

3.2. As NES moves forward into NHS Delivery, it is anticipated that the policy aims of the current NES Strategy will be amalgamated into a new strategy for the new organisation, recognising that the efforts to address the harmful effects of climate change will evolve in response to the actions that are needed nationally

and globally, and as technological solutions evolve and as new research emerges.

- 3.3. Along with the new Strategy, an Action Plan has been regularly reported to the Audit and Risk Committee to give the Committee and the Board assurance that actions are being put in place to contribute towards the national Policy and Strategy.

#### **4. Raising Awareness of Climate Emergency and Sustainability**

- 4.1. There have been a number of initiatives aimed at raising awareness of the issues around Climate Emergency and Sustainability right across NES. A Board Development session has previously taken place on the issue. Board and Committee reports contain a checklist of NES and Scottish Government policies that should be considered when presenting reports and taking decisions, and Climate Emergency and Sustainability features highly on that list of policy considerations. This is aimed at ensuring that Climate Emergency and Sustainability actively features in discussions on NES business as a routine consideration, and not only when specific decisions are required.
- 4.2. Further awareness sessions will take place during 2025/26 with the wider NES workforce, although this will now be in the context of the formation of NHS Delivery from 1 April 2026. These sessions will be aimed at emphasising the importance of incorporating climate emergency awareness and mitigation into the core education and training programmes. The intention is to constantly cascade the messages around Climate Emergency and Sustainability to the entire workforce and then onto the NHS and Social Care workforce that NES currently engages with.
- 4.3. NES regularly participates in and contributes to national events aimed at raising awareness of Climate Emergency and Sustainability issues and developing strategies to combat the effects of climate change. This includes participation in Scotland's Climate Week in support of the Scottish Government, where NES delivered a programme of information sharing and activity between 29 September and 3 October 2025. Furthermore, the Board Champion attends the Climate Emergency and Sustainability Champions Network, and the Executive Lead attends the national forum for Board Executive Leads, so we are constantly connected the emerging policies and strategies and other developments in this area.
- 4.4. The Board will continue to play an active role in this national work to make sure that our own core work aligns with national policy, and that we play a role in supporting the wider NHS in effecting change in how we manage NHS resources to mitigate the impacts of climate change. From 2026 this will be in the context of NES' current areas of responsibility being part of the work of NHS Delivery.
- 4.5. We have also established an active staff Ambassador Network for Climate Emergency and Sustainability, and this group meets regularly to discuss how it can advance the work of NES in this policy area.

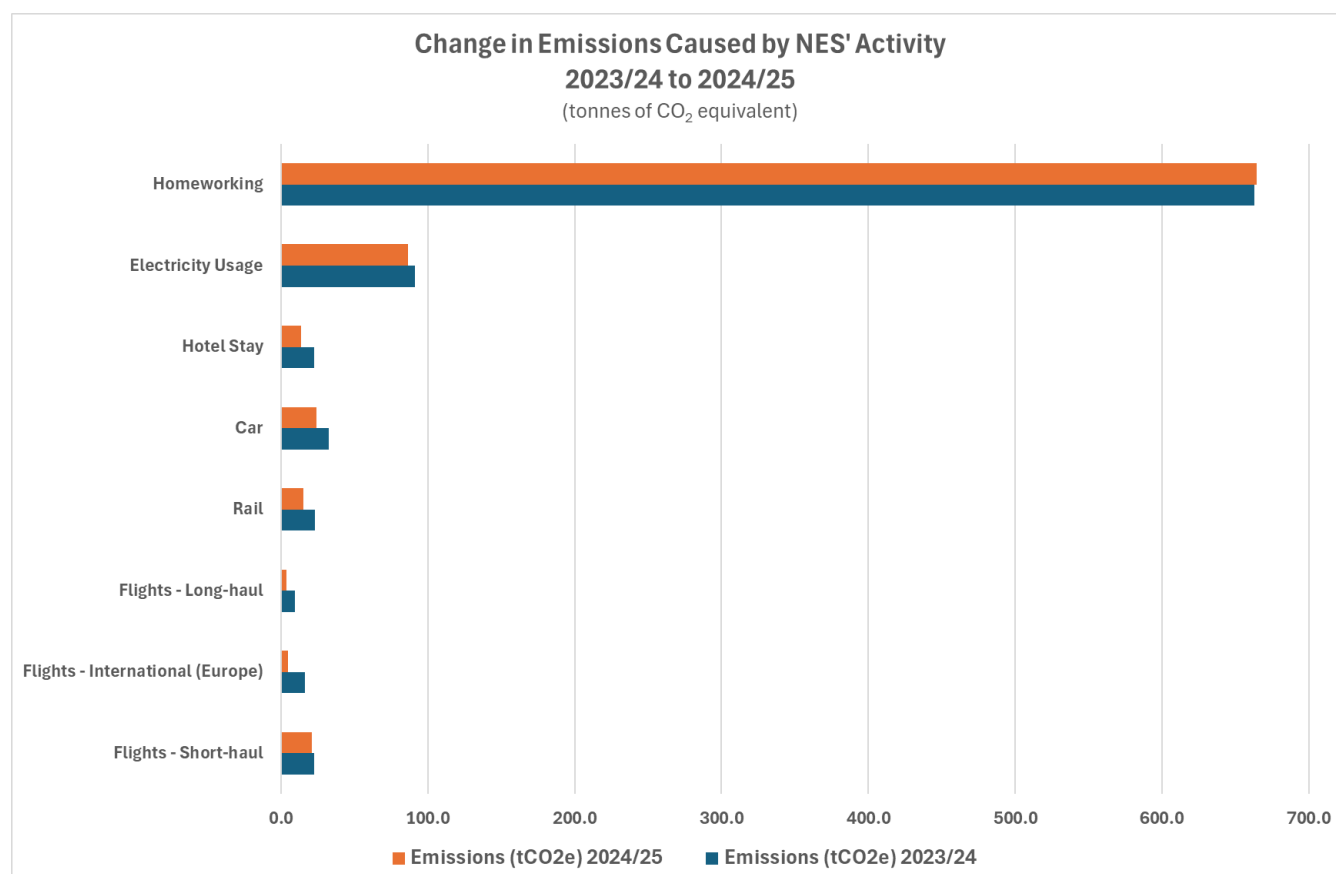
## **5. Climate Change Adaptation**

- 5.1. The climate is changing mainly due to the greenhouse gases already emitted into the atmosphere. While efforts to reduce the rate and scale of climate change continue, we must also adapt to new conditions we are facing.
- 5.2. As a national Board with relatively few properties, negligible levels of surgical gas emissions and waste discharge, the activities of NES have a much more limited direct impact on the environment than those of the territorial Boards. However, NES is a key organisation in driving health and social care practice in Scotland, and we have a responsibility to show leadership to those to whom we educate and train, as well as our own employees, in reducing the impact on the environment from health and social care practice.
- 5.3. For those properties that we operate, and the staff travel that we generate, NES has a statutory duty to ensure that those activities are conducted in a manner that is not detrimental to the country's efforts to reverse the catastrophic damage to the planet. We are required to comply with the same statutory obligations as the territorial Boards.
- 5.4. NES takes the challenge of the climate emergency very seriously, and the Board stands ready to play a full part in meeting that challenge in whatever way it can, either through its own activities directly, or by supporting other Boards in their efforts. NES is ideally placed to support NHS Scotland by raising awareness of climate emergency and helping to disseminate information through education and training at all stages of the learning journey of the workforce.
- 5.5. During 2024/25 we worked closely with colleagues in National Services Scotland (NSS) to develop and host a range of resources aimed at supporting the wider NHS in Scotland to continue to raise awareness of the climate emergency, and to provide practical support information on how to minimise the environmental impact of the activities of the health and social care sector. The Sustainable Action Programme is hosted on NES' Turas platform, and both Boards will continue to work together to develop this resource. During 2024/25 these resources were further developed to be further targeted to the needs of the social care workforce.
- 5.6. NES has carried out awareness raising development sessions for the Board, with an emphasis on the importance of transforming our business activities to comply with climate change and sustainability requirements.
- 5.7. We have also established a Climate Emergency and Sustainability Group to manage and monitor the operational activities of NES to start to ensure that the impact on climate change and sustainability is at least neutral, and if possible, has a positive and beneficial impact. This impact will not be achieved in the very short term but will require a step-change approach to be adopted over the medium term.

- 5.8. This group oversees and monitors activity across all of NES' clinical activities, to ensure that there is consistency across all clinical disciplines and that our programmes of work build in Climate Emergency and Sustainability elements wherever appropriate.

## 6. Emissions Produced in 2024/25

- 6.1. As with all public bodies, NES reports each year to the Sustainable Scotland Network on our Public Bodies Climate Change Duties. This describes the governance arrangements within the reporting body, any adaptation measures being implemented, as well as a full analysis of emissions produced. For 2024/25 a measure of emissions from homeworking has again been included in the NES return after being first reported in 2023/24. This shows a total emissions figure from that source of 664 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent and represents 79.7% of the NES attributed emissions total of 833.3 tCO<sub>2</sub>e.
- 6.2. NES does not collect information from individual employees on their detailed working patterns, so the information on homeworking hours is based on an estimate of 75% of total worked hours being carried out in a home setting.
- 6.3. Overall, our emissions have fallen from the 2023/24 level of 881.9 tCO<sub>2</sub>e to a level of 833.1 tCO<sub>2</sub>e for 2024/25. This represents a reduction in emissions of 5.5% from the previous year and this demonstrates that NES is making significant progress in reducing carbon emissions across all our business operations. For individual emission sources the 2024/25 year-on-year comparison of emissions is shown below:



## 7. Travel and Transport

- 7.1. Domestic transport (not including international aviation and shipping) produced 26% of Scotland's greenhouse gas emissions in 2021. Car travel is the type of travel which contributes the most to those emissions. NES does not operate a fleet of vehicles, but our employees do routinely use their own vehicles and we also make extensive use of public transport in carrying out the services within our Strategic Plan.
- 7.2. The reduction in travel brought about by the Covid pandemic in 2020 saw a significant reduction in business travel for NES, with all travel practically ceasing for a period of time, before increasing slightly as Scotland moved out of the initial stages of the pandemic. This also created a reduction in distances travelled through all forms of transport by NES employees as we moved to a predominantly remote and hybrid model of working. As a result, we saw substantial reduction in the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions generated by our business travel. From 2019/20 to 2022/23, we saw a 77% reduction in the value of our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions attributed to our business travel as set out in the table below:

Source	Description	Amount of greenhouse gas (tonnes of CO <sub>2</sub> equivalent)						% change from 2019/20 to 2024/25
		19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	
<b>Business travel</b>	Greenhouse gases produced by staff travel for work purposes, not using NHS vehicles, and also excluding personal commuting	493	58	53	115	103	69	-86%

- 7.3. Although business travel mileage increased significantly in 2022/23, it has stabilised since then and has fallen back significantly in 2024/25, and we have still seen a sustained reduction in business travel from the last full pre-pandemic year, 2019/20. With the continuation of remote and hybrid working, we see this as a long-term reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from that source. We will strive where possible to further reduce those emissions, even from that low base point, to ensure that the low level of business travel represents our new baseline following the full emergence from the pandemic lockdown periods.
- 7.4. NES and the wider NHS Scotland are supporting a shift to a healthier and more sustainable transport system where active travel and public transport are prioritised, thereby reducing the need to use vehicles.
- 7.5. Prior to the Covid pandemic, NES already had a strong focus on delivering training and education, as well as our strategic and administrative functions, in

a digitally enabled manner. The pandemic increased the scope of this method of working and involved significant technological investment. As we move out of the pandemic, a significant proportion of the workforce continue with remote and hybrid working as the default means of working. NES strongly supports this strategy for the future, not only to provide employee flexibility and choice, but also as a strong contributor to reducing staff travel and commuting. Although we will make adjustments as working patterns and aspirations settle post-pandemic, the remote and hybrid model will continue as the default work style.

- 7.6. NES strongly supports active travel for its staff and provides a number of initiatives to enable and promote this. We support and operate the Cycle to Work Scheme. We took a decision during 2021/22 to increase the scheme financial limits to allow greater access to eBikes, to encourage more employees to participate in cycling to work.
- 7.7. As we look to reconfigure the NES buildings estate in the coming years, access to public transport will feature as one of the key options appraisal criteria, and we would be highly unlikely to support any options that involve employees, or those receiving our services, having any significant need for car transport.
- 7.8. Recognising that some form of car use will be inevitable for the delivery of our services for the foreseeable future, albeit with a policy of encouraging public transport and active travel, during 2023/24 NES implemented a salary sacrifice scheme for ultra-low emission electric vehicles (ULEVs). The scheme was launched in July 2023 and has seen good take up by staff since it was launched.
- 7.9. While NHS Boards more widely are working to remove all petrol and diesel-fuelled cars from their fleets by 2025, NES does not operate a fleet of vehicles, so our focus will be to reduce business travel through other forms and to offer more environmentally sustainable options.

## **8. Building Energy**

- 8.1. We aim to use renewable heat sources for all of the buildings operated by NES by 2038.
- 8.2. NES operates from five buildings all of which are shared with other organisations. None are owned by NES and none are used by NES for direct clinical care. The buildings are:
  - 102 Westport, Edinburgh
  - 177 Bothwell Street, Glasgow
  - UHI House, Inverness
  - Forest Grove House, Aberdeen
  - Frankland Building, University of Dundee Campus

- 8.3. In addition to the above sites, NES also has a presence in the Dental Education Centres in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen.
- 8.4. Like many employers that are continuing to operate in a remote/hybrid manner, NES is currently considering the reconfiguration of its buildings estate, as we are currently carrying excess capacity. Reducing the buildings footprint will help to reduce our overall CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and the reconfiguration will also be designed in a manner that reduces the need for our employees to travel. Reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will feature heavily in the decisions we make around our future estate requirements.
- 8.5. In terms of our Glasgow headquarters, NES made preparations during 2024/25 to relocate from our former site at 2 Central Quay, Glasgow to a new location at 177 Bothwell Street, Glasgow, sharing the site with Public Health Scotland. The building became operational on 7 July 2025. This building is highly energy efficient, using electricity exclusively from renewable sources, and with technology throughout the building that minimises energy use to achieve near net zero operation. This will help NES to make further reductions in its carbon emissions in future reporting periods, and the energy efficiency of this site was a key factor in NES' decision, supported by the Scottish Government, to relocate to Bothwell Street.
- 8.6. In relation to Edinburgh, our forthcoming relocation away from our Westport education and training centre, and a move to a distributed model of education and training venues will present us with a significant challenge in maintaining such low levels of emissions, but we will do what is possible to mitigate the anticipated increase in emissions as much as possible.
- 8.7. Greenhouse gas equivalent data collection as improved for the previous reporting period (2023/24) and the emissions measure for that year of 91.5 tCO<sub>2</sub>e has formed the new baseline for comparison in future years. For this reporting period the emissions from energy consumption reduced to 86.4 tCO<sub>2</sub>e, a reduction of 5.1 tCO<sub>2</sub>e or 5.6%.
- 8.8. NES is actively contributing towards the development of the Environmental Management System used by NHS Scotland which includes the monitoring of energy usage. We are using less energy than in previous years due to the move towards a hybrid presence and the impact of energy reduction measures in previous years, such as the introduction of Passive Infra-Red motion detectors for the lighting in our buildings.
- 8.9. In 2024/25, due to the nature and location of our shared estate, NES generated no energy from renewable technologies, but we do purchase energy that is generated from renewable sources.



## 9. Conclusion

- 9.1. As a non patient-facing NHS Board, NES is not exposed to the main causes of production of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions that the Territorial Boards, and some of the National Boards are: operation of a large buildings estate; running a large fleet of vehicles; the production of large volumes of clinical and food waste; and the discharge of gases and propellants for clinical purposes. Nevertheless, we are required to be fully compliant with the Policy for NHS Scotland on the Global Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development and the NHS Scotland Climate Emergency & Sustainability Strategy.
- 9.2. The development, approval and publication of our Strategy on Climate Emergency and Sustainability represents significant progress since our previous Annual Report was published for 2023/24.
- 9.3. NES will continue to drive improvements in the environmental aspects of our business practices, in particular how we measure the climate impact of everything we do. The Action Plan that accompanies our Strategy will be the principal vehicle for monitoring our progress, and it will be reviewed on a regular basis through our governance structures.
- 9.4. The relocation to our new highly energy efficient Glasgow site at Bothwell Street will help us to drive our emissions down further, and we will make every effort to ensure that emissions from the rest of our estate as contained as much as possible, although this will be a challenge in Edinburgh.
- 9.5. However, our greatest contribution to NHS Scotland's efforts to minimise the climate impact of our health and social care services, will be to ensure that minimising the impact of those services on the climate emergency is fully built into all the programmes of education, training and employee development that we offer. By doing that, the wider workforce will be better equipped to make a positive contribution through all the work that they carry out, and we will make sure that continues as a key focus of our work.
- 9.6. As a Board, NES is now very climate aware, and we will ensure that we maintain our efforts to reduce our own CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, as well as supporting the wider NHS in Scotland.

NHS Education for Scotland

Report submitted: 28 November 2025

Report approved by the NES Board on 20 November 2024