



2d. *How to*: Engage your suppliers to become more sustainable



Why is it important?

For primary care dentistry, procurement accounts for 19% of the carbon footprint, and for the NHS as a whole, 57%. In order to achieve the targets outlined in the Climate Change Act, reducing our carbon emissions from procurement is essential.

Engaging with suppliers and developing a questionnaire for assessing their sustainability practices when procuring goods is a good way to establish whether the products and their delivery are as environmentally sustainable as they can be and can also encourage suppliers to develop more sustainable practices.



What does a Sustainable Practice look like?

Real life example:

Hampshire Partnerships NHS Trust worked with Procure, Supply Chain and other procurement agents to develop specifications that reflect a lowering of the supplier's carbon footprint, and used questionnaires to the suppliers to support this.

Winchester and Eastleigh NHS Trust developed an Action Plan to improve sustainable procurement, working alongside NHS Pro-Cure. The Action Plan included making staff more aware of sustainable procurement, adopting the draft Sustainable Procurement Policy developed by Pro-Cure and to subsequently develop a local sustainability policy.

Modelled example:

Bill is an associate dentist at a mixed NHS/dental practice which has recently developed their own procurement policy that started with paper but now includes all goods they purchase.

As part of this policy, the practice created a questionnaire that they can send to potential suppliers which asks questions about their sustainability statement and policies.

This questionnaire encourages companies to think about their practices and identifies companies which are committed to environmental sustainability. The questionnaire covers areas such as food, supply chain, materials and chemicals, recycling and packaging, carbon emissions, energy use and travel.

Bill discusses this questionnaire with companies and highlights to businesses how important it is for the practice to engage with others who are committed to green policies. He shares information about sustainable companies on his dental blog and tells colleagues about them at LDN meetings he goes to.

Sara Harford, Darshini Ramasubbu, Brett Duane, Frances Mortimer - Centre for Sustainable Healthcare (2018)

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Actions

KEY:

Implementation: Easy = 😊😊😊 Less Easy = 😊

Investment Cost: Low = 💰 High = 💰💰💰

Financial return on Investment (ROI): Low = 🐷 High = 🐷🐷🐷

Environmental benefit: Small = 🌍 Large = 🌍🌍🌍

- Create a Sustainability questionnaire (see example below) and use this when engaging with suppliers to assess their commitment to sustainable practice



- Ask all suppliers if they have a sustainability statement and ask if you can be emailed a copy



Table 1: Suggested Questionnaire for manufacturers.

Questionnaire to suppliers and manufacturers

We take the sourcing of our products seriously. We try to ensure that we buy products from ethical sources and from a supplier that takes an active interest in minimising their impact on the environment.

We would like our patients to be given this information so they are able to make informed decisions about the products that they are purchasing. With this in mind we are now starting to classify our products depending on some of the environmental issues involved.

General Policy

Does the manufacturer and/or distributor have their own environmental policy and sustainability report?²⁸

Please attach:

Does the manufacturer and/or distributor have an environmental, quality management or health and safety management system in place (e.g. ISO14001, ISO9001, OHSAS18001) or any other environmental certifications?



Actions *continued*

Sustainable food?

Does the manufacturer have a goal to increase employee access to local, sustainable food in cafeterias etc?

Sustainable supply chain?

Can the manufacturer trace the supply of the product back to the original manufacturer and if so where was the item produced?

Can the manufacturer trace the supply of materials back to the original raw materials?

Might need to explain some of these...above?

Ethical supply chain?

In terms of labour used at the factory - can we be reassured that the standards within the manufacturing factory are humane and ethical?

Does your company have an established environmentally and sustainable preferable purchasing and supply chain program? If so, please describe.

Does the manufacturer and/or supplier employ children to work at any of its facilities?

Is the workers freedom of movement unreasonably constrained by the manufacturer and/or supplier? Do employees receive a fair wage for their work (at or above national minimum wage)?

What policies and/or management systems are in place to ensure worker health and safety, including reasonable hours worked?

Does the manufacturer and/or supplier have any labour related certifications (e.g. fair trade, social accountability, unionized)?

Materials and Chemicals

Does the company have a commitment to know all of the chemical and material ingredients of products sold by your company and its subsidiaries? If yes, is the list publicly available?

Are any of the materials used in the manufacturer of the product considered to be harmful to the environment?

Do the materials used to make the product come from a natural and sustainable source?

What is the environmental impact of the material and process used to make the product? (Are toxins released into the environment during manufacture?)



Actions *continued*

Materials and Chemicals *continued*

Does the product contain any plastic? And if so, is it pure or composite material?

Is the plastic a petroleum based plastic or natural based acetate?

Does the product contain metal alloys? In what concentrations?

Does the product contain any dyes, paints or other additives? If so, is the chemical information available?

Packaging and recycling See **packaging and recycling**

Does the manufacturer and or suppliers make any attempt to reduce the environmental impact of their packaging?

Is the product of raw material of the product recyclable?

Does the company offer any end-of-life product take-back programs, including electronics? If so, please list all items you take back for responsible recycling, donation, or reuse, and outline the process for participating in the program 28.

What percent of total weight or volume of manufacturing input material is recycled material? (Use Global Reporting Initiative ((GRI)) estimation methods to obtain answer)

What percent of total waste generated by your company and its subsidiaries was recycled or reused?

Carbon emissions

Has the product had a carbon footprint undertaken?

Has the company measured and taken steps to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions (GHG)?²⁸ (See our paper for more details)

Energy use

In the previous year what percent of energy in your company and its subsidiaries consumed was derived from eligible renewable sources?²⁸ (see our energy paper for more details)

Travel use

Does your company have a sustainable travel plan? (see our travel paper for more details)

Follow Government Buying Standards (GBS) when purchasing goods - this will ensure procured goods meet legal and sustainable standards, and that paper has a high recycled content.



Resources

Case studies:

Hampshire Partnerships NHS Trust - Procurement:

<http://map.sustainablehealthcare.org.uk/hampshire-partnerships-nhs-trust/sustainable-procurement>

South East Coast Ambulance Service - Procurement and Tendering:

<http://map.sustainablehealthcare.org.uk/south-east-coast-ambulance-service-nhs-trust/procurement-tendering>

Winchester and Eastleigh NHS Trust - improving sustainable procurement:

<http://map.sustainablehealthcare.org.uk/winchester-eastleigh-healthcare-nhs-trust/improving-sustainable-procurement>

More links:

BDA Members advice on ethical procurement and environmental sustainability from:

<https://www.bda.org/dentists/advice/ba/Documents>

GBS standards for paper product procurement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sustainable-procurement-the-gbs-for-paper-and-paper-products>

GBS standards for timber procurement:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/timber-procurement-policy-guidance-and-support>

Duane, B., Ramasubbu, D., Harford, S., Steinbach, I., Stancliffe, R., Croasdale, K., Pasdeki-Clewer, E. (in press). Environmental sustainability and procurement; Purchasing products for the dental setting. *British Dental Journal*.

Dental Susnet, online network for improving the sustainability of dental services:

<https://networks.sustainablehealthcare.org.uk/dental-susnet>