Centre for Sustainable Healthcare

The Green Nursing Challenge: One year On

October, 2026

INSPIRE EMPOWER TRANSFORM

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Project

The Green Nursing Challenge. One year on.

Supported by

Foundation for Nursing Studies
The Queen's Institute for Community Nursing

Funded by

Micro-tech UK

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Contributors

Our sincere thankyou to the six teams who participated in the Green Nursing Challenge and contributed to this one-year follow-up evaluation. The teams demonstrated how nursing leadership, quality improvement and sustainable healthcare can be combined to deliver benefits for patients, services and the environment. Their willingness to share successes, challenges and learning has made this report possible and will help inform future sustainable healthcare initiatives.

With thanks to the judging panel of the Green Nursing Challenge in 2024.

- Dr Amanda Young, Queens Institute for Community Nursing;
- Dr Johnny Groome, Associate Medical Lead for Sustainability at Nuffield Health, Paediatric Anaesthetic Consultant at Barts Health NHS Trust & Honorary Associate Professor in Sustainability at University College hospital;
- Lucy Brown, Development Director, Centre for Sustainable Healthcare & Head of Sustainability at Circle Health Group,
- Dr Marian Lynch BEM, RN, RMN FRSPH, FRSA. A Foundation of Nursing Studies Trustee, Public health specialist, global health consultant, creative health consultant, Fellow of the Royal Society of Public Health and Fellow of the Royal Society of the Arts.

1. Introduction

In December 2024, the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare (CSH) launched its first Green Nursing Challenge in partnership with the Foundation for Nursing Studies and the Queen's Institute for Community Nursing. The project was fully funded by Micro-Tech UK.

The Green Nursing Challenge is a national quality improvement initiative based on the Green Team Competition– a clinical leadership & engagement programme for care organisations wishing to improve the sustainable value of their services.

6 teams were recruited, supported and mentored by CSH to implement high impact improvements & measure the impact of their projects using the Sustainable Value Equation.

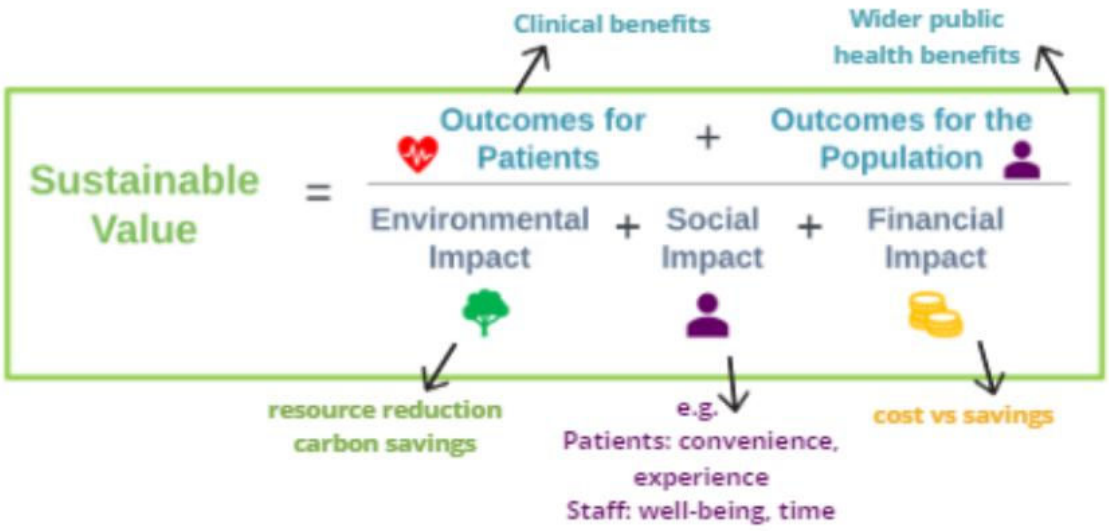


Figure 1. Sustainable Value Equation, Centre for Sustainable Healthcare

The teams presented their projects at an online showcase event. The combined projects demonstrated projected annual cost improvement of **£691,844** and annual carbon reduction of **77,398 kgCO2e**, equivalent to driving almost 228,000 miles in an average car.

2. Case Studies

The six projects are reported and summarised in the CSH Sustainable Healthcare Resource Library within the CSH Sustainable Healthcare Networks. The networks bring together patients, clinicians, researchers, educators, students, and managers interested in Sustainable Healthcare, and provide a platform for sharing resources, knowledge, and ideas, connecting like-minded individuals from around the world.

- **Winning team:** Norfolk & Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
  Developing a combined maternity and IBD clinic to reduce repeat appointments, streamline care, and cut associated carbon emissions.
  Combined multidisciplinary Pregnancy and Inflammatory Bowel Disease Clinic

- **Highly Commended:** Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
  Introducing continuous blood glucose monitoring to improve diabetes management at home and reduce avoidable hospital admissions.
  Comprehensive reviews for patients on insulin, including the use of continuous monitoring technology

- Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
  Trialling reusable kidney dishes to replace single-use alternatives, aiming to reduce waste and scale sustainable practice across the trust.
  From Single-Use to Re-usable Kidney Dishes

- Liverpool Heart & Chest Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
  Switching from IV to oral administration for certain medications and adopting reusable sheaths for trans-oesophageal echo probes to cut waste and reduce risks
  Switching from IV to oral potassium and paracetamol, and standardising the hanging times of IV giving sets for potassium and paracetamol

- Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust
  Designing a structured 'Trial Without Catheter' process to reduce catheter overuse, prevent complications, and minimise hospital interventions.
  Trial without catheter - a structured approach

- Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
  Exploring the use of a digital app to support patients with long-term conditions, improving self-management, preventing deterioration, and reducing care-related emissions
  Promoting remote care using a digital platform (Isla App)

3. Methodology

In the year following completion of the Green Nursing Challenge, the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare (CSH) undertook a follow-up evaluation to understand the longer-term impact of participation. All six participating teams were invited to contribute to the evaluation.

Information was gathered through a structured follow-up survey, email correspondence and individual follow-up discussions with project teams. This approach enabled teams to provide both factual updates on project progress and reflective accounts of their experiences since completion of the programme. Illustrative quotations have been included throughout the report to provide context and capture participants' experiences in their own words.

Data were collected on:

- Whether projects had been embedded and sustained within routine practice;
- Spread of interventions to other teams, departments or organisations;
- Barriers and challenges encountered that hindered progress or continuation;
- Factors that enabled progress and supported successful continuation of projects;
- Personal and professional development outcomes for participants, including leadership, quality improvement and sustainable healthcare competencies;
- Dissemination activities, including presentations, publications, awards and conference contributions;

This evaluation was designed to assess the ongoing influence of the Green Nursing Challenge rather than to formally re-measure all original project outcomes. As such, findings are based primarily on self-reported information provided by participating teams. The purpose was to understand whether improvements had been maintained, how projects had evolved over time, and the wider impact of the programme on individuals, services and organisations.

4. Outcomes and learning

Five out of six teams reported that their sustainable healthcare improvement work had been sustained one year after participation in the Green Nursing Challenge.

For those teams where work was ongoing, or partially continued, teams reported '*The Green Nurse Challenge*' and staff engagement had supported their successes.

> *"The GNC work around sustainability has enabled us to engage more with promoting the benefits. We are rolling out project across the service."*

> *"It worked so well, everyone was engaged"*

Barriers to sustaining improvement

Despite continued progress in many areas, teams identified several common barriers to maintaining and expanding their work. These included staff capacity constraints, competing organisational priorities, resistance to change, workforce turnover and limited protected time for improvement activity.

Pressures on clinical services were frequently cited as slowing implementation and wider roll-out. Participants described challenges engaging key stakeholders, particularly where sustainability projects competed with operational demands. Changes in staffing and leadership also affected continuity, with some projects losing momentum because of role changes, recruitment of new staff, or personal circumstances affecting project leads.

One team reflected on the difficulty of progressing sustainability initiatives when immediate service pressures dominated organisational attention:

> *"No project time. No capacity to push sustainability-driven projects. Focus on operational priorities."*

Another highlighted the challenge of embedding new practices within a changing workforce:

> *"Resistance to change, new staff recruited (20+) so difficult to embed these new practices."*

While barriers were common, two teams reported experiencing no significant obstacles to implementation, with one team describing continued growth and expansion of their project over time.

Enablers of successful implementation

Teams identified several factors that supported successful implementation and long-term sustainability of their projects. These included collaborative working across teams and services, strong project team relationships, clear communication, staff engagement, and regular opportunities to review progress and address challenges.

> *"Collective work with primary care colleagues."*

> *"Listening to staff concerns, taking action where required, reassuring and communicating with the team."*

Participants described the value of maintaining regular contact with project teams, listening to concerns and adapting approaches in response to feedback. Continued engagement with frontline staff helped sustain enthusiasm and identify opportunities for further improvement.

Despite these successes, participants identified several factors that would help support further spread and scaling of their projects. While many projects had become embedded within their original settings, participants identified additional time, capacity and organisational support as being critical to further roll-out and expansion.

> *“The switch to reusable was successful on PCU. Fully embedded. We have not been able to roll out to other wards which had been our plan.”*

Participants noted that while enthusiasm for the projects remained high, current workforce pressures often limited the ability to sustain momentum and support wider adoption. Suggestions included protected staff time, dedicated project leadership, renewed team capacity and stronger organisational endorsement to support implementation at scale.

> *“Recognising the reality of our current pressures make any focus on a major project seem very far away.”*

> *"To take the project outside of the ward area, it needs to be considered as a worthy project trust-wide."*

Future plans and spread

All teams reported ambitions to continue developing their projects. Planned activities included wider implementation across services, establishing quality improvement and sustainability champions, conducting further evaluations, and continuing to measure outcomes. One team planned to undertake a formal evaluation after one year, whilst another reported continued positive patient outcomes.

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Teams described aspirations to:

- Roll out interventions across additional services, departments or patient groups.
- Apply successful models of care to other clinical pathways and populations.
- Embed sustainable healthcare principles within quality improvement structures and future projects.
- Conduct further evaluation and outcome measurement including additional staff and patient feedback.

One team reported that a further outpatient department had requested support to implement the innovation, while another had shared its approach across community teams for local adaptation and adoption.

> *"Our Cardiology Outpatient department intends to switch and has requested support. Plans to start are imminent".*

> *"We have shared our success with the rest of our community teams for them to implement as appropriate"*

> *"DNs doing a large part of the work now"*

> *"Plans to implement similar model of integrated working to incorporate other disease groups (epilepsy in pregnancy)"*

These responses suggest that, for many participants, the Green Nursing Challenge acted as a catalyst for ongoing improvement activity rather than a time-limited project. Some projects had already spread beyond their original settings, with teams reporting adoption by other departments, services and professional groups.

Wider impact on organisations and practice

Participation in the Green Nursing Challenge appeared to influence practice beyond the original projects. Teams reported that their work helped raise awareness of sustainable healthcare, embed sustainability considerations into routine improvement activity, and stimulate further sustainable healthcare initiatives within their organisations.

> *"Re-enforces idea that in Critical Care -there is a culture to work sustainably. In recent interviews, candidates mentioned gloves off knowing I was part of the panel!"*

In some cases, improvements generated wider benefits than originally anticipated. One team reported that service redesign had helped identify previously unmet patient needs and improve access to appropriate care.

> *"Better care has uncovered previously unmet needs. Women previously lost to follow-up care are now actively engaged and reviewed."*

These findings suggest that, beyond their original aims, projects may generate additional benefits for patient care and service delivery as implementation matures.

> *"Early recognition of disease activity is leading to appropriate escalation of treatment"*

These examples demonstrate how sustainable healthcare initiatives can deliver wider benefits beyond environmental impacts, including improved patient engagement, earlier identification of need, enhanced quality of care and more appropriate use of healthcare services.

Professional development and leadership

Participants consistently described positive personal and professional development outcomes from taking part in the programme. Reported benefits included increased confidence in quality improvement, greater understanding of sustainable healthcare, strengthened leadership skills and a stronger commitment to embedding sustainability within future work.

Several participants reported applying learning from the programme beyond their original projects. Examples included becoming quality improvement coaches, incorporating sustainability into other improvement initiatives and pursuing further learning opportunities in sustainable healthcare.

Participants also described increased confidence in using the SusQI methodology and the

triple bottom line approach to understand and communicate the broader impacts of healthcare improvement.

> *"I have become a QI coach and undertaken an internal six-month programme to be one. I have more confidence in QI. I am much more aware of the sustainable agenda and am bringing it into other projects."*

> *"Increased confidence in leadership and all the above - although took this meeting* [to reflect on progress] *to appreciate this!"*

Another participant highlighted how the programme had strengthened their commitment to sustainable healthcare:

> *"I'm totally committed to embedding SusQI in all projects. My passion to use the triple bottom line is stronger than before."*

> *"I'm seeking more knowledge, through academic training on sustainability which would build my confidence. I wish there was more time to connect with likeminded people."*

Participants also reflected on specific lessons gained through delivering improvement projects, including the importance of collecting baseline data, measuring impact over time, and understanding the practical challenges associated with carbon footprinting in healthcare.

> *"being aware of requiring baseline info before starting projects"*

> *"motivation still there, lived experience of a project (even if it didn't go quite as would have hoped due to unforeseen circumstances).*

> *"Greater understanding of carbon footprinting (but it remains hard!)"*

Reflections highlighted the importance of perseverance, adaptability and recognising that progress is not always linear.

> *"If something doesn't work out, park it for a bit, and when you have capacity at a later date, go back to it."*

This reflects a broader theme emerging throughout the evaluation: while barriers and competing priorities often slowed progress, many participants remained committed to continuing and building on the work initiated through the Green Nursing Challenge.

Dissemination and knowledge sharing

Teams continued to share learning from their projects. Internal dissemination activities have included presentations at quality improvement events, departmental meetings and divisional forums. Some teams also maintained local awareness through posters shared in clinical areas and ongoing promotion of sustainable practices among staff.

Beyond their organisations, participants shared their work through conferences, professional networks, publications and national sustainability events.

Presentations and abstract posters:

- **Round Table Discussion:** World Federation of Incontinence and Pelvic Problems: Empowering Patients and Advancing Science - Global summit on Pelvic Health Myra Robson, Lewisham Community & Primary Care Team with their 'Trial without Catheter – a structured approach'https://wfipp.org/event/wfipp-20th-anniversary-global-summit-on-pelvic-health/
  - **Poster:** International Continence Society *'Developing a Structured Community Trial With Out Catheter Service',* Myra Robson (Lewisham Community & Primary Care Team) ICS 2026 Abstract #825 Developing a Structured Community Trial With Out Catheter Service

  - **Nursing & Midwifery Sustainability Network presentations:**
    - Phillipa Noble Norfolk & Norwich University NHS FT 'Combined Multidisciplinary Pregnancy & Inflammatory Bowel Disease Clinic. CSH Nursing & Midwifery Event: Combined Nursing and Obstetric Irritable Bowel Disease Clinic
    - Erika Takaran Lewisham Community & Primary Care Team with their 'Trial without Catheter – a structured approach' Trial Without Catheter: A Structured Approach | CSH Nursing & Midwifery Susnet Event
    - Scheduled November 2026: Rebecca Palmer, Sheffield Progressive Care Unit: "From Single-Use to Re-usable Kidney Dishes"
    - Date TBC Gabrielle Parham, Oxford Health Foundation Trust 'Comprehensive reviews for patients on insulin, including the use of continuous monitoring technology'.

Publications:

- **Patient Safety Learning Hub***:*
  Lewisham Community & Primary Care Team *'How a catheter removal project improved care for patients while saving money and carbon emissions'* *How a catheter removal project improved care for patients while saving money and carbon emissions - Climate change/sustainability - Patient Safety Learning - the hub*

- **RCNi – awaiting publication.**
  Myra Robson Lewisham Community & Primary Care Team with their '*Trial without Catheter – a structured approach*'

Awards

The Green Nursing Challenge and participating teams have received recognition through national and international awards, reflecting the quality, innovation and impact of the projects delivered.

Programme Recognition

- **NHS England Excellence Awards 2026.** Winner of Regional Champion Award: *The Green Nursing Challenge*.



(Left to Right) Lucy Brown, Development Director & Angela Hayes, Nurse Fellow, CSH at the NHS England Excellence Awards, 2026

Award Winners

- **British Journal of Nursing Awards 2026, Sustainability Nurse of the Year**

Winner: Gabrielle Parham, Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, *Comprehensive reviews for patients on insulin, including the use of continuous monitoring technology*



(Left to Right) Kirsty Gee, QI facilitator and Gabrielle Parham, Senior Matron for Community Nursing, Oxford Health, at the British Journal of Nursing Awards

- **Second place:** Norfolk & Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, *Combined Multidisciplinary Pregnancy and Inflammatory Bowel Disease Clinic*
- **Third place:** Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust, *Trial Without Catheter – A Structured Approach*

- **International Hospital Federation Awards 2026**
  - **Honourable Mention: Excellence in Low-Carbon Healthcare,** Norfolk & Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, *Combined Multidisciplinary Pregnancy and Inflammatory Bowel Disease Clinic*



(Left to Right) Angela Hayes Nurse Fellow, CSH; Kirsty Gee, QI facilitator and Gabrielle Parham, Senior Matron for Community Nursing, Oxford Health; Pip Nobel, Midwife and Heather Simpson (retired IBD Nurse Specialist), Norfolk & Norwich University NHS FT; Anna Brady, Nurse and Midwifery Innovation Project Lead, CSH at the The British Journal of Nursing Awards 2026.

Finalists

- **Nursing Times Awards 2026 – Sustainability Category**

    - Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, *Comprehensive reviews for patients on insulin, including the use of continuous monitoring technology*.

Judges' comments: …" an inspiring and well-developed submission that demonstrates meaningful sustainability improvement within the context of delivering effective care for patients with diabetes... the initiative shows clear practical value, supported by evidence of both effectiveness and contribution to patient care and service delivery, with measurable outcomes presented clearly to illustrate the tangible difference the work has made.

    - Norfolk & Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, *Combined Multidisciplinary Pregnancy and Inflammatory Bowel Disease Clinic*

Judges' comments…" a fantastic project and excellent example of multidisciplinary working...the judges appreciated the whole-system and collaborative approach, along with clear passion for improving patient care, achieving excellent outcomes for a patient group with long-term physical health issues and a good understanding of the challenges they face... definitely a transferable project that could be used in different areas, with compassionate support shown throughout..."

- **Nursing Times Awards 2026 – Continence Promotion and Care Category**
    - Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust, *Trial Without Catheter – A Structured Approach*

Judges' comments…" a well-rounded project with a clear line of sight to improving patient care...The quality improvement initiative demonstrates strong awareness of system pressures and the need to balance high-quality care with sustainability, supported by measurable data on service utilisation, and participation in the Green Nurse Challenge provided a valuable framework for addressing the clinical, cost and environmental aspects of the work."

Shortlisted Projects (Awaiting results)

- **HSJ Patient Safety Awards 2026 - Patient Safety Initiative of the Year Category**
    - Norfolk & Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, *Combined Multidisciplinary Pregnancy and Inflammatory Bowel Disease Clinic*

- **HSJ Patient Safety Awards 2026 - Improving Medicines Safety Category**
    - Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, *Comprehensive reviews for patients on insulin, including the use of continuous monitoring technology*

- **HSJ Patient Safety Awards 2026 - Harnessing Human Factors Category**
    - Lewisham and Greenwich NHS Trust, *Trial Without Catheter – A Structured Approach*

5. Conclusion

One year after completion, the Green Nursing Challenge has delivered benefits that extend well beyond the original competition period. Five of the six participating teams reported that their sustainable healthcare improvement work had been sustained, embedded or further developed, demonstrating that the programme has the potential to support lasting change in practice.

Perhaps most importantly, the evaluation suggests that the Challenge was not simply a mechanism for delivering individual improvement projects. It acted as a catalyst for leadership development, organisational learning and ongoing quality improvement. Participants described greater confidence in applying sustainable healthcare principles, increased commitment to SusQI approaches, and a stronger understanding of how environmental, social and financial outcomes can be considered together when improving care.

The evaluation also highlights the realities of implementing sustainable healthcare in practice. Teams encountered significant challenges, including workforce pressures, competing priorities and limited protected time. Despite these barriers, many projects continued to progress, spread to new settings and generated further opportunities for improvement. This suggests that the value of the programme lies not only in the projects delivered, but also in building the capability, motivation and networks needed to sustain change over time.

The projects demonstrated that sustainable healthcare can support improvements in patient care as well as reductions in environmental impact. Teams reported examples of enhanced patient engagement, improved access to care, more integrated services and the identification of previously unmet needs. These findings reinforce the central principle of sustainable healthcare: that environmental sustainability and high-quality care should be pursued together.

The continued dissemination of project learning through conferences, publications, professional networks and national awards further demonstrates the wider influence of the programme. Knowledge generated through the Challenge is continuing to reach new audiences and support the spread of sustainable healthcare innovation across the health system.

Overall, this follow-up evaluation suggests that the Green Nursing Challenge has been an effective model for empowering nurses to lead sustainable healthcare improvement. While continued organisational support will be important to enable wider implementation and scale-up, the programme has demonstrated that nurses can play a critical role in identifying opportunities for change, delivering measurable improvements and embedding sustainability within everyday practice.

CENTRE *for* SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE

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CSH is an independent non-profit leading sustainable transformation in health systems. We offer strategic input to healthcare organisations through a variety of bespoke services and initiatives and provide education and guidance for healthcare professionals. We also undertake groundbreaking research projects that will improve the sustainability of the healthcare sector worldwide.

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