

IPC Bulletin for GP Practice Staff

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Produced by an NHS Community Infection Prevention and Control Team based in North Yorkshire for distribution to subscribers.

New Year's resolution 2026 - IPC sustainability

The NHS as an organisation contributes between 4% and 5% of the UK's total carbon emissions. In October 2020, the NHS became the world's first health service to commit to reaching net zero carbon.

As we head into the year 2026, consider what changes you can make to become a more sustainable Practice and reduce your carbon footprint.

Here are 6 IPC supported suggestions to help you start 2026 with a sustainability focus

1. Correct classification of waste

- Waste classified as more hazardous than it actually is results in it being disposed of at a higher disposable cost.
- Clear labelling on the bins make it easier for staff to identify which bin to use.
- Sharps bins can now be used until the volume of sharps has reached the 'fill line'. This reduces the number of sharps bins being incinerated.



[Health Technical Memorandum 07-01: Safe and sustainable management of healthcare waste](#)

2. Recycle

Recycling of waste, where appropriate, will decrease the amount entering the domestic waste stream.

3. Risk assess to decide if gloves are required

- Before reaching for gloves, 'stop and think', are they required?
- Only use gloves if contact with blood, body fluids, mucous membranes, non-intact skin, the patient has a confirmed or suspected infection or chemical hazards are likely.



[NHS England » 'The gloves are off' campaign](#)

4. Decide if the product is required before use

- Couch roll is not impervious and does not cover the whole examination couch, the couch requires cleaning even if couch roll is used.
- Only use couch roll if required rather than for all patients. For example, use as a dignity cover during smear tests, to protect clothing from ultrasound gel and when examining patients who are bleeding or have oozing wounds.



5. Reusable items

Consider switching from single use disposable items to those that can be decontaminated and reused.

6. Small changes can make a big difference

- Choose products that are manufactured in the UK to reduce transport costs.
- Select products that have reduced or recyclable packaging.

There are various online resources available to assist you in providing a more sustainable service.

[Greener NHS](#)

[Green physician toolkit | RCP](#)

[Home | Sustainable Quality Improvement](#)

[Home Page – CarbonCalculator](#)

What's new

- Coming soon - updated 'Community IPC Policies for General Practice'. [Watch this space.](#)
- IPC training event for General Practice: 5th October 2026. **BOOK NOW to reserve your place** at www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/events/.
- [General Practice Nurse Network Webinar – The Queen's Institute of Community Nursing](#) : 10th March 2026.

Visit our website to find lots of IPC resources, many of which are free to download.

www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk

Call us on 01423 557340.

