

Royal College of Physicians' report card on the UKHACC commitments

The Royal College of Physicians (RCP) is committed to minimising the environmental impacts of its operations.

In May 2025, the RCP published its first report card on the UKHACC commitments, a set of guiding principles developed by UKHACC to help health organisations take steps to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

The RCP committed that it would publish two report cards in 2025, to

track progress in the first year of being signed up to the UKHACC commitments. After this, the RCP will report annually on its sustainability commitments as an organisation.

This is the second report card published in 2025, providing a summary update on the RCP's work against each of the UKHACC commitments since May.

UKHACC commitment	The RCP's progress to date	The RCP's next steps
1. Declare that the climate emergency is a health emergency	<p>The RCP has said consistently that the climate emergency is a health emergency, including in its 2023 RCP view on healthcare sustainability and climate change.</p> <p>The RCP reiterated that the climate crisis is a health crisis in summer 2025, including in a letter to The Guardian about the heatwaves that the UK experienced over the 2025 summer period.</p>	<p>The RCP will continue to campaign for the climate emergency to be recognised as a health emergency, and for action to be taken to tackle climate change because of its health impacts.</p>
2. Publish a plan for your organisation to get to net zero	<p>The RCP has made progress in reducing its carbon footprint, but has not yet developed a plan to reach net zero. The RCP has two office sites in the UK – at Regent's Park, London and The Spine, Liverpool.</p> <p>The RCP recognises that it cannot achieve net zero in its current London headquarters in Regent's Park (a Grade I listed building, built in the 1960s) – but we continue to make improvements.</p>	<p>Net zero is a key priority for future estates planning in London.</p> <p>Work will continue at the RCP's site in Regent's Park, London to improve its efficiency.</p>

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2. Publish a plan for your organisation to get to net zero	<p>These include upgrading the HVAC for the office spaces, including a full redesign of the existing system and a reduction of internal cassettes with a more energy-efficient and cost-effective solution.</p> <p>The RCP will be offering Ecosia as a search engine option to staff from January 2026.</p>	The RCP is working alongside Liverpool City Council with regards to how we can best achieve net zero at The Spine.
3. Campaign on mitigating and adapting to the planetary crisis	<p>As a founding member of UKHACC, the RCP has campaigned on mitigating and adapting to the planetary crisis for a number of years. The RCP actively contributes to UKHACC, including signing letters to ministers, joining in campaign actions and participating in working groups to draft UKHACC reports.</p> <p>Throughout the UK heatwaves in 2025, the RCP raised the need to adapt the NHS to extreme temperatures, and shared advice from the Society for Acute Medicine about hot weather adaptation and mitigation.</p> <p>As part of the RCP's campaigning on air quality, we published a new RCP report on air quality in June 2025, which considered the relationship between air quality and climate change policy and made recommendations for government. The RCP ran a webinar about the recommendations of the report in November 2025, with the RCP's special adviser on air quality.</p> <p>In 2024, the RCP published the Green physician toolkit – the first of its kind for the physician community – including actions to adapt to the consequences of the climate crisis. This toolkit was updated in 2025, developed by a short-term clinical reference group, with representatives from the medical specialties as well as academic and patient representatives. The refreshed toolkit includes a section on adaptation,</p>	The RCP will continue to campaign on mitigating and adapting to the planetary crisis, both through its own policy and campaigns work and as part of UKHACC.

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3. Campaign on mitigating and adapting to the planetary crisis	including actions on adapting care plans and undertaking medication reviews ahead of heatwaves.	
4. Embed sustainability in governance, structure and culture	<p>At an organisational level, the RCP's Project Management Office (PMO) has responsibility for tracking the RCP's progress against each of the 11 UKHACC commitments.</p> <p>To support its policy and campaigning work on this topic, the RCP has a special adviser on healthcare sustainability and climate change, a sustainability fellow and an RCP advisory group on sustainability and climate change. This group and the special adviser role were established to advise on the RCP's influencing and policy direction on sustainability and climate change.</p> <p>To embed sustainability in the RCP's culture, a Belonging and Wellbeing newsletter was shared with staff in August 2025 on the RCP's intranet, themed on sustainability and including tips on how to be sustainable in the office.</p>	<p>The RCP will explore how it can further embed sustainability into the wider governance and culture of the organisation. This will include the PMO coordinating quarterly reporting to the RCP Strategy Executive Group and annual reporting in the RCP's annual report as required by the Charity Commission.</p> <p>The RCP's advisory group on sustainability and climate change will continue to advise the RCP on its policy, influencing and campaigning activities on sustainability.</p> <p>The RCP People and Culture team is continuing to develop a programme for embedding sustainability in the RCP's culture.</p>
5. Develop a plan for sustainability in your specialist area	<p>The RCP represents physicians from over 30 medical specialties.</p> <p>The <u>updated Green physician toolkit</u>, published in December 2025, includes a range of actions relevant to all physician specialties to improve the sustainability of clinical practice, from physical waste and diagnostics to prescribing and telehealth.</p>	<p>The RCP will continue to promote the updated Green physician toolkit and the #GreenPhysicians video series on social media.</p>

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5. Develop a plan for sustainability in your specialist area	<p>In early 2025, the RCP brought together representatives from the medical specialties to consider specialty-specific actions for sustainable healthcare. Many of these representatives then participated in the short-term clinical reference group to refresh the Green physician toolkit, which the RCP hopes will prompt dedicated, specialty-led sustainability actions.</p> <p>An RCP member – an expert in urolithiasis – is currently representing the RCP on the GIRFT work on net zero urology. This follows the RCP supporting a successful bid for UKRI funding led by GIRFT and the University of Exeter to establish a 5-year research hub to produce decarbonisation guidance across medical and surgical care pathways.</p> <p>The RCP launched a video-based social media campaign called #GreenPhysicians to showcase quality improvement projects from physicians across a range of specialties. Four videos have been published so far on reducing hospital stay, reusable diabetes pens, reducing coagulation testing and unnecessary glove use.</p> <p>The RCP celebrated sustainable medicine at its Excellence in Patient Care Awards, with a specific 'Sustainability' category to recognise individuals or teams that have adopted sustainable practices to reduce the environmental impact of healthcare and deliver combined health, environmental, financial and social benefits. Dr Vincent Simpson and Dr Deepthi Lavu won this category.</p>	<p>The RCP will continue to support the GIRFT work, by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing experienced physician input to support GIRFT working groups to produce decarbonisation guidance for medical care pathways • providing experience and expertise from the RCP's sustainability advisory group that will enhance the co-development of sustainability guidance • reviewing co-badging, and promoting relevant publications and resources • communicating with and educating members and the wider healthcare system about key outputs, as well as engaging with policymakers. <p>The RCP Education directorate is considering ways to improve the sustainability of workshop delivery, including reduction of waste through use of electronic rather than printed resources, and to facilitate online delivery of workshops and courses.</p>
6. Educate members on the links between climate and health	The RCP has a long history of promoting public health through evidence-based policy. Physicians and medical professionals have a key role to play	A podcast with colleagues from Médecins sans Frontières will be published in February 2026,

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<p>6. Educate members on the links between climate and health</p>	<p>not only in managing ill health, but also in supporting people to live healthier lives.</p> <p>At the RCP's Med+ conference in November 2025, the RCP education fellow for sustainability led a workshop exploring tips on improving the sustainability of individual practice (inspired by the Green physician toolkit).</p> <p>An introduction to healthcare sustainability, and sustainability in quality improvement were delivered as dedicated sessions to the latest cohort undertaking the RCP's Chief Registrar Programme. These first sessions were delivered as part of the initial face-to-face teaching block in September 2025. Throughout the year-long programme, there will be further opportunities for chief registrars to liaise with experts in sustainability and thus consider and incorporate this vital issue into their projects.</p> <p>A 'teaching toolkit' PowerPoint slide deck with comprehensive teaching notes, led by the RCP's education fellow for sustainability, provides a ready-made introductory teaching session on healthcare sustainability and will be made available for use in medical teaching nationwide.</p> <p>The RCP has published two new podcasts: a conversation between the RCP's special adviser on sustainability and NHS England's chief sustainability officer Chris Gormley, and another on sustainable diabetes care.</p>	<p>discussing the impact of climate change on communicable diseases. Further podcasts are in discussion with speakers and details are to be confirmed, but topics of interest include a 'sustainable hospital toolkit' project, global health, air pollution and plastic pollution.</p> <p>The RCP teaching toolkit on sustainability will be made available soon and marketed widely.</p>
<p>7. Disinvest in fossil fuels and sign the</p>	<p>The RCP <u>ended all its investments in fossil fuels</u> 2 years ahead of the deadline set in the new climate policy that it adopted in January 2020.</p>	<p>The RCP reviewed its investment strategy in 2024 and recommitted its stance on no investments in fossil fuels.</p>

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fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty	The RCP signed the fossil fuel non-proliferation treaty in 2022. The RCP is <u>listed under the 'United Kingdom' list of signatories.</u>	An update will be requested for the 2025 annual report.
8. Acknowledge the link between climate change and inequalities	The RCP has been explicit in its campaigning about the need to consider health inequalities in terms of the impacts of climate change, but also the impacts of adaptation, such as ensuring that a move away from fossil fuels is a just transition, and that people are able to insulate their homes with government help.	<p>The RCP will continue to acknowledge and highlight the link between climate change and health inequalities.</p> <p>The RCP will continue to make the case for a just transition from fossil fuels, and that the transition to net zero must be done in a way that does not exacerbate existing inequalities.</p>
9. Develop and implement a travel policy for members and staff	<p>The RCP's new travel policy, implemented in 2025, states that <i>claimants should consider the impact that travel has on the planet when deciding to travel and selecting the most appropriate mode of travel.</i></p> <p>It says that domestic air travel is discouraged due to its impact on the environment, and only allowed in exceptional circumstances with the approval of an executive director. It must always be economy class.</p>	The RCP will review in January 2026, a year from its introduction, the impact of the new travel policy on the use of domestic flights.
10. Prioritise plant-based and sustainably sourced food	<p>The RCP's catering is provided by Company of Cooks. This is for all internal and external catering, including RCP member conferences, staff events and when our spaces are hired as commercial event spaces.</p> <p>Our hospitality package is underpinned by Company of Cooks' 'higher welfare purchasing strategy', which now applies to all menus and food packages. This includes using only seasonal produce, exclusively British</p>	The RCP will continue to work with suppliers to ensure the ongoing delivery of a wide range of sustainable and nutritious food options.

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10. Prioritise plant-based and sustainably sourced food	<p>meat and cheeses, avoiding air-freighted items wherever possible and excluding Marine Conservation Society 4- and 5-rated seafood.</p> <p>Company of Cooks delivered a bespoke 2024 year in review sustainability report for the RCP, noting that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beef doesn't feature in the top five product categories for carbon impact, demonstrating that beef is very limited on menus • 20% of food and beverage spend in 2024 came from London Larder suppliers • 70% of coffee purchased in 2024 was Direct Trade certified • there was a reduction in the quantity of napkins and blue roll used from 2023 to 2024 • the percentage of fish classified as alternative (meaning that they are not 'big five' species, which are overfished) increased from 30% in 2023 to 52% in 2024 – exceeding our target of 50%. <p>The RCP London site has engaged with its recycling supplier, First Mile, and is complying with the new recycling legislation that came into effect in April 2025.</p>	
11. Move to greener banking choices	<p>The UKHACC commitment on green banking defines a green bank as one that does not invest in fossil fuels.</p> <p>The RCP has now completed its promised research into the green banks available that would meet its banking requirements and risk profile.</p>	<p>The findings of the RCP's research into green banks will shape our next steps to moving to greener banking. This report will be presented to the RCP Board of Trustees in 2026.</p>

The decision to sign up to the UKHACC commitments was taken by the RCP's Strategy Executive Group in November 2024. Coordinating updates on the commitments is led by the RCP's Project Management Office. For any further information, please email kieron.scott@rcp.ac.uk.