



Sustainability

What is sustainability?

If the global health and care sector were a country it would be the fifth largest emitter of carbon (CO₂e), highlighting that major change is needed in the sector. The importance of a shift towards more sustainable ways of working has been gaining traction over the last few decades, as the impact of climate change becomes more evident.

A report by the United Nations Brundtland Commission in 1987 defined sustainability as "**meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.**"

While the environmental impact is vital to sustainability, it should not be the sole consideration. This is reflected in frameworks such as the 'Three Pillars of Sustainability', which comprises of environmental, social and economic sustainability. The framework proposes that if one of the pillars is weak, then the system as a whole is unsustainable.

Let's Not Waste - What a Waste

When we think of waste, we might think of it solely as things that are thrown away, like broken equipment or rubbish. While those things are certainly waste, we can think of this more broadly and include things such as wasted time, systems and workforce.



As part of the Lets Not Waste programme, the Bevan Commission has produced [What A Waste](#), which looks into this in more detail. It contains a wealth of information about what can be considered waste, what the problems and challenges are, and offers some examples of what can be done to make health and care more sustainable .

The report breaks waste down into six categories:

Workforce: staff turnover, vacancies and volunteers

Administration: appointments, patient communication and care co-ordinators

Services: food, cleaning, equipment

Treatment: medications, inappropriate treatment and errors

Energy: transport, buildings and utilities

Systems: transfer of care, technology and inappropriate referral



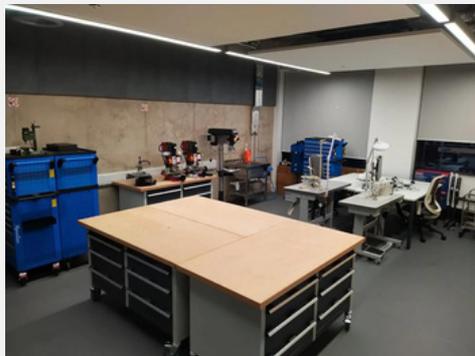
What is the circular economy?

Shifting from a linear economy to a circular economy can support a shift to a more sustainable health and social care system. A linear economy follows the process of taking resources, making something with them, consuming the thing you made and then throwing it away, whereas a circular economy aims to close the loop, ensuring products and resources are reused, recycled, repurposed and stopping waste from being produced in the first place. In 2021, Welsh Government announces its plan to make the circular economy in Wales a reality in the [Beyond Recycling](#) strategy.

To learn more about the circular economy and some practical examples of how this can be achieved, take a look at the RIC Hub's ['What is the circular economy?'](#) guide.

RemakerSpace

RemakerSpace is a Cardiff Business School and PARC Institute not-for-profit initiative dedicated to enabling the circular economy and ending planned obsolescence by extending the lifecycle of products. Committed to driving fundamental changes to the way goods are designed, made, consumed and disposed of, the initiative works with community groups, business and education providers to drive the circular economy in Wales and beyond.



The centre has a wide range of facilities, including an industry-standard 3D printing lab, state-of-the-art virtual reality headsets and visualisation space, and a workshop hosting a range of traditional tools and equipment, such as domestic and industrial sewing machines, electrical repair and testing tools and woodworking facilities.

To learn more, visit [the RemakerSpace website](#).

‘Repurposing of NHS Cardboard into Pet Bedding in partnership with a Local Social Enterprise’

The CTM RIC Hub led a project to address the issue of waste production in the NHS. The project focuses on the recycling of cardboard, which is a significant waste product for CTMUHB, and found that it can be recycled and reused as pet bedding. The project involved working with a local social enterprise, Elite Paper Solutions, to collect and transport the cardboard to their unit in Merthyr Tydfil, where it is sorted and baled for recycling. This approach significantly reduced the carbon footprint and saved money, while also supporting local employment.





The next steps for the project include calculating the carbon footprint of all CTMUHB sites, working with Elite to collect cardboard from across the estate, exploring further possibilities for recycling plastics, and examining possibilities for reducing cardboard use upstream through procurement. This project demonstrates how the principles of the circular economy can be applied to healthcare settings to improve sustainability and reduce waste. To learn more, contact joanne.sullivan3@wales.nhs.uk.

Cardiff and Vale UHB have developed a similar solution to cardboard waste with Elite, keep an eye out for an upcoming case study for more information.

Repair Café

A great example of the circular economy in practice is Repair Café Wales, who host events across the country focused on repairing and reusing household items that might otherwise have been thrown away. Not only does this initiative contribute to a more sustainable future, it also aims to increase community cohesion and facilitate the sharing of skills, which can lead to better health and wellbeing.



Oak Field Primary School in the Vale of Glamorgan have been hosting their own Repair Café, connecting the school with the local community and teaching pupils vital skills that can be used throughout their lives. Visit the [Repair Cafe Wales website](#) to find an event near you and get in touch if you'd like to more about local initiatives.

Social Prescribing

Social prescribing is defined in Wales as “connecting citizens to community support, to better manage their health and well-being” and can play a role in creating a sustainable health and social care system. Research shows that one in five people consult their GP for what is primarily a social need and social prescribing is a non-clinical option for these needs.



The Hub has worked with the Wales School for Social Prescribing Research (WSSPR) to develop a series of tools to embed social prescribing in Wales and facilitate the sharing of learning and good practice. All of the resources can be found on the Hub's [website](#).

The Hub has set up a Social Prescribing Network for anyone interested in social prescribing. Thus far, the Hub has hosted events to share good practice examples from around the world, hear the latest on Welsh Government's work to develop a national framework, and provided opportunities for anyone interested in social prescribing to work together.

The next event is scheduled for 3.30-5pm on Monday 9th October 2023 and will feature a run through of the Development Matrix developed in the Hub's work with WSSPR and a Q&A session with Karen Parady, who is an expert in social prescribing from a GP clusters perspective. Click [here to join the event](#) or email Dylan.John4@wales.nhs.uk for more information.

Take a look at our [website](#) for more of our work or get in touch via

Dylan.John4@wales.nhs.uk to discuss how you can adopt more sustainable approaches in your area

