

The British Association of Critical Care Nursing Environmental and Sustainability Policy

Introduction

The British Association of Critical Care Nurses (BACCN) recognises the significant environmental impact of healthcare delivery and the crucial role nurses play in promoting sustainability. The BACCN also recognises the critical importance of environmental sustainability and its impact on human health and well-being. This policy outlines the BACCN's commitment to environmental sustainability and encourages its members to adopt eco-conscious practices in their professional and personal lives.

The triple planetary crisis of climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss severely harms the Earth's health, posing an immediate threat to human survival. Healthcare delivery is worsening this emergency due to the resource-intensive manufacture of large amounts of devices and equipment, the large generation of polluting waste (e.g., volatile gases, medicines, packaging, and non-recycled or disposable equipment) and the use of fossil fuel-derived power, which all lead to greenhouse gas emissions exacerbating climate breakdown. Immediate action is needed, and it must be delivered at pace and scale.

BACCN supports the integration of environmental sustainability into the planning, delivery, and evaluation of critical care services. We advocate for a holistic approach that considers ecological, financial, and social resources to meet the health needs of the present population without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. This policy offers guidance on how to shift to environmental sustainability. Public health measures for disease prevention and health promotion to reduce the demand for intensive care are also important, and every staff member is responsible for personal actions to live in a way that does not destroy the planet.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff, volunteers, trustees, members, and contractors of the BACCN. It covers all aspects of the charity's operations, including:

- Office Operations: Energy consumption, water usage, waste management, printing and photocopying, travel, and procurement.

- Events and Meetings: Venue selection, travel arrangements, catering, and waste management.
- Communications: Print and digital communications, including the use of paper and electronic resources.
- Community Engagement: Promoting sustainable practices within the communities we serve.

Guiding Principles

- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: Prioritize waste reduction, reuse of resources, and effective recycling programs within healthcare settings.
- Resource Efficiency: Promote the efficient use of energy, water, and other resources in critical care units.
- Sustainable Procurement: Advocate for the procurement of environmentally friendly and sustainable products and services such as:
 - Energy-efficient medical equipment
 - Recycled and recyclable materials
 - Products with minimal packaging
 - Pharmaceuticals with reduced environmental impact
- Carbon Footprint Reduction: Encourage the reduction of the carbon footprint associated with healthcare delivery, including:
 - Minimizing travel for professional development activities
 - Promoting the use of telemedicine and remote consultations
 - Supporting the development of sustainable transportation options for healthcare workers
- Education and Awareness: This goal is to raise awareness among members and the wider nursing community about environmental sustainability issues and best practices.
- Collaboration: Collaborate with other healthcare organizations, professional bodies, and policymakers to promote sustainable healthcare practices.
- Advocacy: Advocate for policies and initiatives that support environmental sustainability within the healthcare sector.
- Leadership and Collaboration: Foster a culture of environmental responsibility and collaborate with stakeholders to achieve sustainability goals.

- Continuous Improvement: Regularly evaluate and improve environmental performance through monitoring, auditing, and innovation.

Policy Statements

1. Leadership and Governance

BACCN will demonstrate leadership in environmental sustainability within the critical care nursing community.

BACCN will establish an environmental sustainability committee or designate a lead to oversee the implementation and monitoring of this policy.

BACCN will integrate environmental sustainability considerations into its strategic planning and decision-making processes.

We recommend that each ICU appoint a clinical lead for environmental sustainability and ensure that sustainability is a standing agenda item in quality meetings. Sustainability principles should be embedded in staff inductions, ongoing education, and quality improvement initiatives.

2. Resource Management

BACCN will minimize energy consumption in its offices and operations through energy-efficient practices and technologies.

BACCN will conserve water and promote responsible water usage.

BACCN will implement effective waste management programs to reduce waste generation, promote recycling, and ensure proper disposal of hazardous materials.

BACCN will reduce paper consumption and promote the use of electronic resources for communication and documentation.

3. Sustainable Procurement

BACCN will prioritise the procurement of products and services that have a lower environmental impact, considering factors such as recycled content, energy efficiency, and reduced packaging.

BACCN will engage with suppliers and vendors to encourage sustainable practices and promote transparency in their environmental performance.

4. Sustainable Clinical Practice

We endorse the four principles of sustainable clinical practice:

- Disease prevention and health promotion: Supporting early intervention and rehabilitation to reduce long-term dependency and improve outcomes.
- Patient education and empowerment: Promoting shared decision-making and advance care planning to align care with patient values.
- Lean service delivery: Encouraging evidence-based, high-value care that minimises unnecessary interventions and waste.
- Low carbon alternatives: Advocating for the use of environmentally preferable products and practices, such as switching from intravenous to oral medications where appropriate.

4. Travel and Transportation

BACCN will promote sustainable travel options for its staff, members, and event attendees, such as public transportation, carpooling, and virtual meetings.

BACCN will minimize the environmental impact of its events and meetings by selecting venues with sustainable practices, reducing waste, and offering plant-based catering options.

5. Education and Awareness

BACCN will educate and train its members on environmental sustainability in critical care nursing, promoting best practices and innovative solutions.

BACCN will raise awareness among its members and the wider healthcare community about the importance of environmental sustainability and its link to patient care and public health.

BACCN encourages ICU staff to:

- Implement sustainable practices within their clinical settings.
- Educate colleagues and patients about environmental sustainability.
- Advocate for sustainable healthcare practices within their workplaces.

- Participate in professional development activities related to environmental sustainability.

6. Community Engagement

BACCN encourages all critical care units to:

- Include environmental sustainability in all stages of ICU planning and redevelopment.
 - Comply with statutory standards such as the NHS Net Zero Building Standard.
 - Incorporate environmental costs into procurement decisions.
 - Adhere to NHS waste management standards and promote appropriate use of PPE.
- BACCN will engage with local communities and organisations to promote environmental sustainability initiatives and support community health and well-being.

BACCN will collaborate with national and regional partners to support sustainable healthcare initiatives and contribute to the development of local Green Plans. We will advocate for policies and practices that reduce the environmental footprint of critical care nursing while safeguarding patient safety and care quality.

7. Monitoring and Reporting

BACCN will monitor its environmental performance and track progress toward its sustainability goals.

BACCN will regularly report on its sustainability efforts and achievements to its members and stakeholders.

8. Continuous Improvement

BACCN will regularly review and update this policy to reflect evolving best practices, emerging challenges, and new scientific evidence.

BACCN will strive to continuously improve its environmental performance through ongoing evaluation, innovation, and collaboration.

Implementation, Monitoring, and Review

BACCN will:

- This policy will be reviewed and updated annually to reflect evolving best practices and emerging challenges by the BACCN Board.

- Progress toward achieving environmental goals will be monitored and reported on annually.
- The charity will strive to continuously improve its environmental performance through ongoing evaluation and implementation of best practices.
- BACCN will regularly monitor the progress of its sustainability initiatives and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy.

Communication

BACCN will communicate this policy to its members through various channels, including:

- The BACCN website
- Newsletters and publications
- Conferences and workshops
- Social media

Collaboration

BACCN will collaborate with other healthcare organisations, professional bodies, and stakeholders to advance the goals of this policy.

Responsibility

All staff, volunteers, trustees, and contractors are responsible for complying with this policy and contributing to the organization's environmental sustainability goals.

This policy serves as a framework for the BACCN's environmental sustainability efforts. It will be further developed and implemented through the development of specific action plans and targets. By working together, we can create a more sustainable and environmentally responsible healthcare system for future generations.

References

Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine and Intensive Care Society (2025). Guidelines for the Provision of Intensive Care Services (GPICS) Version 3 – Consultation Draft. London: FICM & ICS.

University of Brighton, Intensive Care Society, The Faculty of Intensive Care and UK Critical Care Nursing Alliance. (2025) Intensive Care Environmental Sustainability Recipe Book Version 1.0. University of Brighton, Intensive Care Society and The Faculty of Intensive Care Medicine.

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