



The UK Kidney Association Sustainable Kidney Care programme: a collaborative, national initiative; strategy, successes and lessons

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Introduction

The UK Kidney Association's Sustainable Kidney Care programme was launched as a statement of intent in late 2021. Formed as a partnership between the UKKA, the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare and the Sustainable Healthcare Coalition, it was born of engagement events, earlier that year, with industry and with the multi-professional and patient communities to help define programme scope and structure.

High level targets

Our first task was to set two, high level goals:

Target 1: meet or exceed* Greener NHS carbon net zero goals

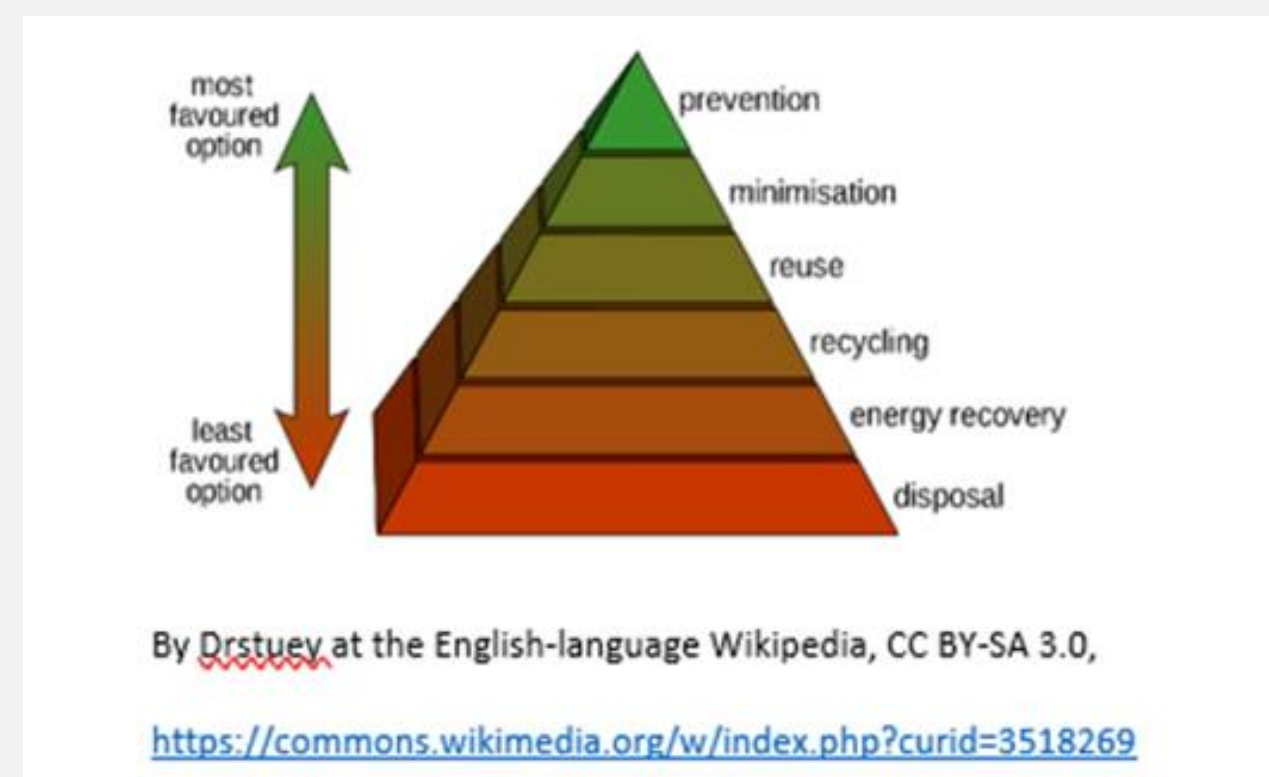
Greener NHS net zero targets (1990 baseline):
NHS carbon footprint: under direct NHS control, **net zero by 2040**; ambition for **80% reduction by 2028-2032**
NHS carbon footprint **plus**: including wider supply chain, **net zero by 2045**; ambition for **80% reduction by 2036-2039**

*social weighting in procurement or equivalent tools will be utilised to drive more ambitious targets

Target 2: meet or exceed goals for circularity** in kidney care

Circularity by 2045; ambition for **80% reduction in waste to landfill or incineration by 2036-2039**

** social weighting in procurement or equivalent tools will be utilised to reward solutions that:
demonstrably shift processes up the waste hierarchy (see below)
shift onus for waste management from the end-user



Delivery of these goals is through three, individual workstreams although other programmes of work are in development – for instance, on climate adaptation and on articulation of other high-level goals relevant to planetary ceilings and social foundations.

Workstream 1: action learning & education

Aim: re-vitalise the Kidney Care Sustainability Network

Progress: as of late September 2023, only 12 of 81 adult and paediatric Renal units actually had named sustainability champions.

Systems-level approaches: given the risk of burn-out of a small number of enthusiasts, Green Nephrology in the 2020's includes a significant top-down strategy. The financial component of the sustainable value equation (figure 1a) offers a potential hook but the additional workload needed to realise these gains may be a barrier in a stressed NHS.

Other systems-level catalysts include the Renal Services Transformation Plan, with its sustainability component requiring an appropriately skilled and influential team member committed to delivering sustainable kidney care (figure 1b.).

Funding support: this offers another potential catalyst and we secured this for at least the supervision if not the clinical back-fill for a cohort of group scholars who present their year-end findings at our national SKC webinar on 18th October. Initial uptake was lower than hoped for (5/10 posts, filled) with role-holders often drawn away from day-release by clinical duties. A change of tack to a Green Kidney Ward challenge is being considered for 2024.

Grass-roots support and engagement: this has included:

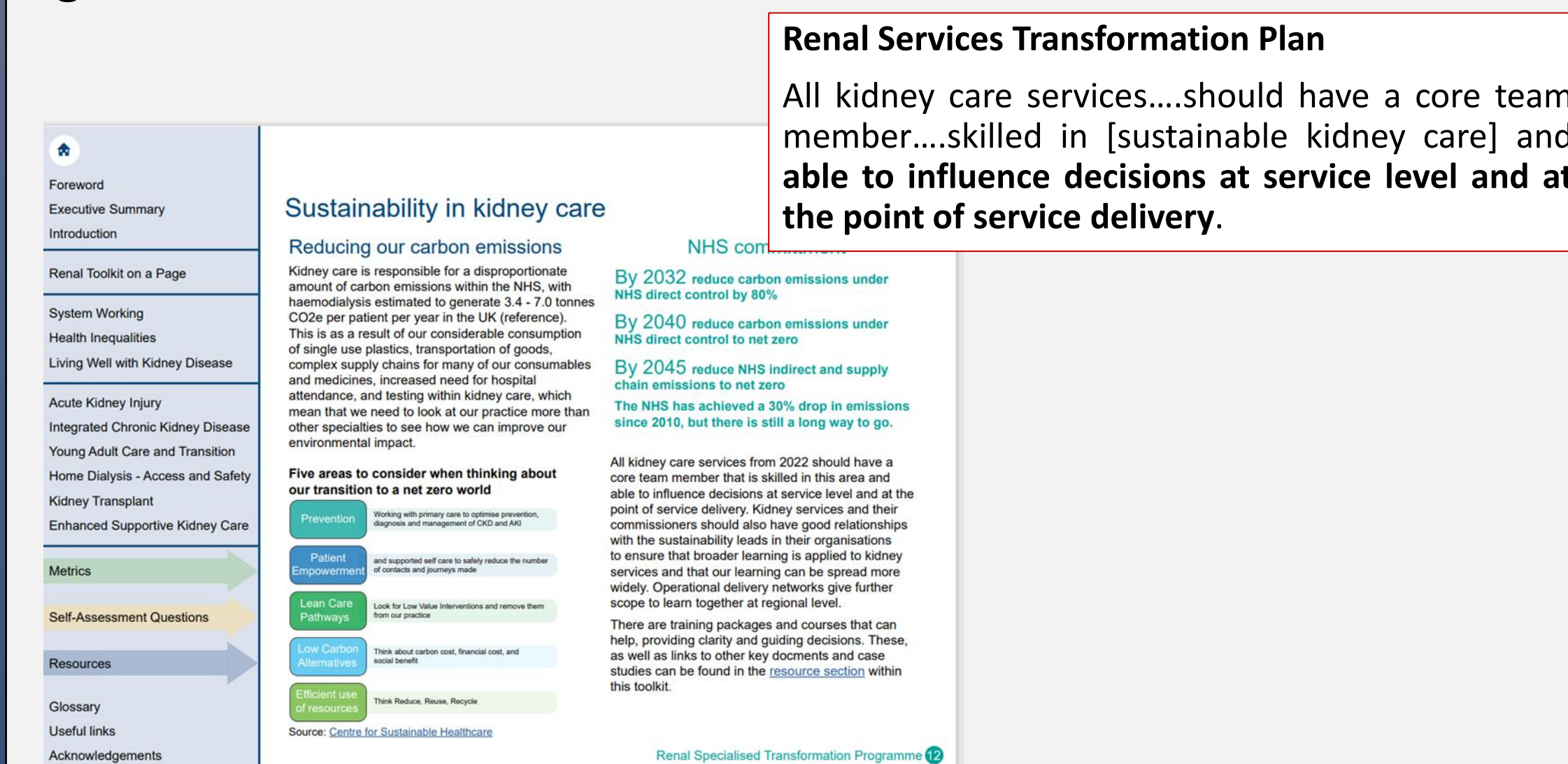
- revitalising the sustainable kidney care case study repository <https://networks.sustainablehealthcare.org.uk/kidney-care>
- regular, online, learning and sharing events
- our pop-up climate clinic at UK Kidney Week, June 2023
- a “12 tips to green a kidney unit” guide [Search: “12-steps-green-kidney-unit”](#)
- a complementary “Individual actions” guide [Search: “Kidney, 12-things-we-can-do-individuals-become-greener”](#)

Finally, the CSH launched its sustainable kidney care course, last year, providing more in-depth training for those that need it
[Search: “sustainable kidney care course”](#)

Figure 1a. The sustainable value equation used in susQI

$$\text{Value} = \frac{\text{Outcomes for patients and populations}}{\text{Environmental + social + financial impacts (the triple bottom line)}}$$

Figure 1b.



Workstream 3: sustainable care pathways

Aims and progress:

Develop and disseminate a metrics package for renal service water & energy use, and waste production – feasibility testing is underway in units across Yorkshire, and North-East & North Cumbria Renal networks.

Input into clinical practice guidelines: introducing principles of sustainability into clinical recommendations.

Newcastle – Sustainable Healthcare Coalition collaboration:

This collaborative project is feeding into workstream 3 through the development of carbon calculators for Renal care pathways; our first, for in-centre HD (<https://ICHDcarbon.org>), was launched in June this year.

Workstream 2: procurement, infrastructure & innovation

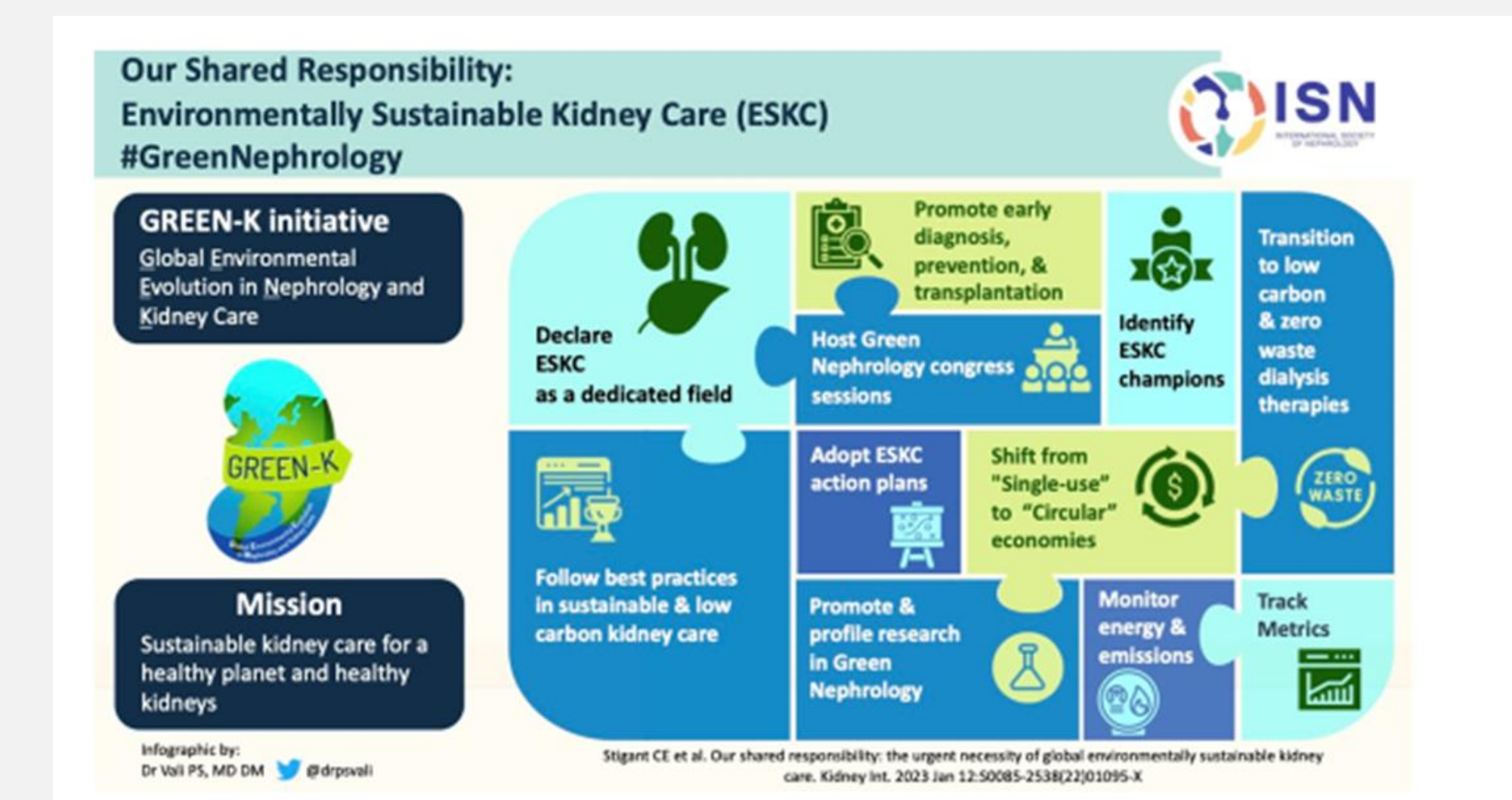
Aims:

Establish an industry liaison group
Develop a **generic** joint statement of demand of industry covering all kidney care products

Progress:

The joint statement would cover not just decarbonisation but also other relevant issues such as circularity, adaptation and supply chain ethics. This is a resource intensive process even for one product so the first step is the development of a generic joint statement of demand to apply to all renal products.

One significant change involves the International Society of Nephrology's new GREEN-K initiative (see graphic, below), which has representation from all major national and international renal societies. Mindful of the need to include the voices of global nephrology – particularly from the global south – and the power of presenting the community's consensus to industry, the UKKA procurement workstream has now been subsumed into that of GREEN-K. This global generic joint statement of demand is scheduled for release in the first half of 2024.



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See our dedicated webpage: search “UKKA SKC”