



Environmentally Sustainable Emergency Medicine

How to set up (and maintain) a Green Group in your ED

These 'Top Tips' draw on feedback from the *GreenED* pilot project 2022¹ to provide guidance on effectively setting up a green group in your Emergency Department (ED).

Consider reading '[Top Tips on Securing Senior Support](#)' before embarking on setting up your own green group, as senior buy-in can be invaluable during this phase.

1) Initial Steps

- **Start the conversion.** There is already a lot of interest out there.² As well as Advanced Clinical Practitioners (ACPs), Emergency Department Assistants (EDAs), doctors and nurses, remember that non-clinical colleagues may be equally or more motivated to take part in *GreenED*. Involve domestic and office staff (porters, housekeepers, managers, administrators, receptionists, etc.) in discussions from the outset
- **Connect up ED colleagues** who are already interested in taking action on climate change and other environmental crises such as plastic pollution. There may be colleagues who are motivated by related concerns such as departmental waste in general, inefficient resource use, messy staff rooms and disposability culture.
- **Don't double up.** Setting up a new group takes time and energy, both of which are often scarce in EDs. Discuss early with the sustainability team or manager in your trust to minimise the risk of duplicating work that may have been done in other departments. They may be able to tell you if a green group had been set up. Is it still up and running? If not, what happened and why? Who was involved? They may also have lots of useful contacts.

2) Forming a Green Group

- **Green champions.** Identify clinical, domestic, administrative and managerial 'green champions' to help set up and lead the group. It doesn't have to be a big group, but try to have clinical and non-clinical, junior and senior staff represented as this will

¹ https://rcem.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/GreenED-Pilot-Report-March_2023.pdf

² A 2017-2019 staff and sustainability survey carried out by the since-restructured NHS Sustainable Development Unit (SDU) found that the vast majority of NHS staff believe it is important to be environmentally responsible in the workplace and at home – with 98% believing it is important for the health and care system to support the environment.

bring a diversity of perspectives on departmental problems (and how to solve them). The more multidisciplinary the green team, the better.

- **Longevity.** Try to ensure the group involves long term or permanent members of staff who will be able to keep the project going beyond training staff changeover.
- **Not (just) another Whatsapp group.** Once your group is set up, consider agreeing to meet regularly, maybe every two months at first, whatever works for your team to communicate ideas and find enthusiastic people.

It is sometimes worth keeping things small to start off with to find your feet as a group, develop a vision and to set goals of what you want to do. Choose a communications platform which everyone is familiar with (email or whatsapp is usually the most effective).

Once your group is formed, consider drafting a series of objectives and aims for the group, and make sure there is a clear purpose to keep activities focussed. Ask the following questions:

- Why do we need to form a group?
- What do you want the group to achieve? What sort of work are we wanting to do?
- Who would we like to be involved with? Who would lead and coordinate this?
- How do we measure change? How would the group sit in the organisation?

3) Maintaining the Group

- **Communicate.** Get an allocated notice board/space, ideally with recycled paper posters and QR codes for links. If you have access to your departmental online resources or trust intranet this may be another way of collecting ideas and resources in a central place.
- **Make it QI.** EM trainees can now provide evidence of yearly QI activity in non-clinical 'Green' topics - engage this group.
- **Expect a drop off.** Don't be disheartened if the initial response is very positive but then wanes. This was a common feature in the pilot phase of *GreenED*, and many individuals may drop in and out of the group according to other commitments they have (exams, winter departmental pressures etc).
- **"People who stay together, play together"** so have fun! Previous green ED groups have organised social events outside of the work setting, or even organised cake sale events to raise awareness in the ED!

- **Integrate.** As your group becomes more established, consider integrating into other departmental activities. Consider having *GreenED* items as a standing item on the ED governance agenda or ED staff inductions. Why not run sustainability tours throughout the department or climate focus days to refresh information as new members join the group.
- **Little and often.** Small but regular communications with the wider ED are sometimes better than infrequent detailed sessions. For example, regular announcements at joint medical/nursing handovers, or ‘bitesize’ multidisciplinary teaching sessions, may be more effective than a one off teaching session for the registrars or SHOs.
- Lastly, keep in touch with the *GreenED* network! You can sign up to the newsletter [here](#) and there are lots of free open access resources on the [GreenED website](#). The Centre for Sustainable Healthcare hosts an [Emergency Care Sustainability Network](#) which is accessible to all, and is a useful discussion forum. Finally, if you have any good case studies or insights you would like to share about your green group please get in touch via greened@rcem.ac.uk.