



Environmentally Sustainable Emergency Medicine

Top Tips on securing senior support for *GreenED* Projects

It may be junior staff who are initially most involved in driving forward the environmental agenda in Emergency Departments (EDs), but the difficulties faced in achieving lasting change without senior buy-in were a key finding in the *GreenED* pilot in 2022.

Support and buy-in from both clinical leads (medical and nursing) as well as key management staff will help to ensure continued success in improving both cultural and practical aspects of environmental sustainability. Importantly, involvement of a senior member of the team who is a long term or permanent employee at the department will help to mitigate against the risk of individual efforts going to waste.

Below are some tips from clinicians who have already been involved in implementing *GreenED* in their departments on how to secure senior buy-in and support.

Green ED Team Top Ten Tips

1. **Link in with the Trust Sustainability team.** They may have ongoing projects which you can link the ED into, and are likely to have contacts throughout the hospital, including those in senior management positions.
2. **Find your best ally.** Interest in sustainability will vary amongst senior staff, and a supportive colleague will make things easier in the early stages.
3. **Think about longevity.** Try to engage those in permanent positions in the department, to ensure continuity.
4. **Aim to engage widely amongst the ED team.** Successful *GreenED* projects are likely to require engagement and support from multiple different team members in the ED, including nursing, managerial, medical, pharmaceutical and portering/estates.
5. **Target the driver that will interest your target audience** when securing senior buy in:
 - Environmental savings
 - Improvements to patient care
 - Cost incentives and financial savings
 - Time savings
 - Staff morale and team building by uniting behind a common goal, and ideas being heard and put into action in your department.
6. **Frame sustainability as a pillar of quality**, which is directly linked with improved service provision and patient experience. This is supported by the [RCEM position statement](#) on environmentally sustainable care.

7. **GreenED may meet mandatory targets.** Sustainability/carbon targets may become mandatory in the future, and some trusts are introducing sustainability as a part of consultant appraisal.
8. **Adaptation.** EDs need to think about adaptation to prepare for the effects of climate change, e.g. risk of departmental flooding, as well as the mitigation of carbon emissions as part of the Greener NHS targets.
9. **Sustainable QI** is an excellent way for junior doctors to get involved with QI projects.
10. **Feedback** on progress keeps momentum going across your green team. Provide regular updates from ongoing projects in the department.

Deon Louw, EM Consultant, Oxford

As with many things, showing alignment with the organisational structures that pay our salaries is a good lever. Most Trusts have a sustainability strategy, or should have. When approaching a clinical lead/divisional lead etc, it is powerful to portray the initiative as supporting the Trust's strategic objectives. This is also the case for the five year plans of integrated care boards (our commissioners), and of course NHSE.

Even If senior colleagues don't have time to lead anything in your department, it may still be possible to secure endorsement from them

For any juniors I would suggest:

- Reach out to the consultant body and find the people with sustainability awareness. Getting support in principle is important, even if it just means you have a senior to refer to and copy into emails when approaching others. Busy consultants may not have time to offer direct support, but being able to say to estates, infection control, etc that consultants are on board has value.
- Take to the clinical lead and mention that this will further Trust strategy/aims (as above). But don't be discouraged if she/he is not enthusiastic. Just keep going and find others who are.
- Approach new consultants coming on board who do not yet have a full portfolio of projects. With some luck they will be keen.
- Reach out to the Trust sustainability network; there may be consultants in theatres who have taken on the challenge. They will also be supportive and again, you can use the example of work done elsewhere to sway less enthusiastic colleagues. Sometimes they just need to see that you and I are not lone voices but that the Trust, other senior colleagues, and peers are actively embracing the sustainability agenda.
- Another way might be to approach the Trust sustainability lead directly. In some cases it will be someone who was given the brief as part of lots of other projects. They may ask/suggest that you talk to your consultants. When you then approach the clinical lead/consultants you can say that the Trust sustainability lead has awareness of the project and suggested consultant overview.

- Present your ideas at any forum available to reach more people in the department. Governance is one, teaching sessions another. And don't forget the importance of the matron who has a lot of sway.
- As you can see, getting new projects supported is a bit of a political game sometimes. But if you play it right and make the right friends you can get things done.

Emma Carver, EM Consultant, Bristol

My advice is to:

- Propose green QI projects within your department and present these to the trust to the sustainability team. Also, as Deon says, if you propose and carry out a project you should get some consultant support. Even if sustainability is not their area of interest at the start it might blossom and engage them or others.
- Ask for nurse representation as well as doctors – a senior nurse lead may be as useful an ally as a consultant (or senior middle grade) Getting permanent members of staff involved is key.
- Presenting and teaching at conferences gets you kudos and interest from a wider audience and can be a good way to build your green team.
- Look out for, and reach out to, colleagues in other specialties who are doing sustainability work – anaesthetics is often a good bet, as they are usually doing something on volatile gases. If you have found an ally, perhaps schedule regular catch-ups to keep momentum going.

Helen Wilkins, EM Consultant, Coventry

Talk to everyone (including staff who work in ED or visit on a regular basis eg different specialties or physiotherapy or /occupational therapy). You never know who has links to people in important places in the trust who can help you. Support can come from random conversations with people while waiting for trauma alerts! People gave me contacts then I approached them directly.

Try to gain an understanding of who can help you in the organisation. For me it was the sustainability manager, net zero nurse and loads of other people including the head of nursing and head of estates, both of whom had an interest in the net zero agenda. Our innovations department and communications department were a huge support too. We also have a sustainability pharmacist who has been a brilliant support.

The other point I would make is that you really need to self promote and get noticed. So regular updates to every single person who works in ED, filling grand round gaps at short notice with green stuff. I also included key managers in the trust in my green WhatsApp so they had a constant idea of what was happening. It's a bit cynical but you're only as good as you say you are!

The final (and possibly most important) point is working out what drives people. For our trust it was definitely saving money and good publicity. So emails saying we can save x amount by doing these green initiatives or we can be the first trust to introduce DPI or similar almost always got a quick positive response.