



RCN Foundation Sustainability and Environment Policy

Contents

RCN Foundation Sustainability and Environment Policy	1
1. Introduction	2
2. Purpose	3
3. Scope	4
4. Impact	4
5. Action	4
6. Staff engagement	5
7. Operations	5
8. Governance	6
9. Procurement	6
10. Organisations we fund	7
11. Policy Review	7

Version Control:

Version No.	1.0
Approval Date	
Approved by	
Circulated to	Income Generation and Investment Committee
Next Review Date	2027
Policy Owner	Fundraising and Communications Manager

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Nursing and midwifery staff have a critical role to play in helping to deliver UN climate goals. Their impact is important and potentially far reaching in terms of developing innovation, caring for patients affected by climate change, and raising public awareness. Furthermore, we know that [those living in deprived communities are more adversely affected by climate change](#). Therefore, tackling this issue is also central to addressing the health inequality agenda. It is also important to note that [the health service contributes around 4-5% of total UK carbon emissions](#) and the NHS in England alone is responsible for 40% of the public sector's emissions.
- 1.2. According to a [report from Charity Digital](#), almost nine in ten charities (88%) say they are concerned about the impacts of climate change, but just half say it's currently a priority for their organisation, with a quarter saying other pressing priorities are taking precedence over more climate action. 71% of charities say they expect to be affected or have already been affected by the impacts of climate change. According to the report, the challenge is that charities are unclear as to what actionable steps they need to take to become more sustainable.
- 1.3. Funders such as the RCN Foundation can play a vital role addressing the causes of climate change and supporting adaptation to its effects. Funders can help ensure that everyone has access to opportunities arising from the transition to a low carbon economy, and to ensure that the costs are not disproportionately borne by those who are least able to pay.
- 1.4. The RCN Foundation has committed to the Funders Commitment on Climate Change (FCoCC), [The Funder Commitment on Climate Change \(FCCC\)](#) was launched in 2019 and is a holistic, high-level framework supporting funders to play their part in tackling the causes and impacts of climate change. By signing up to the FCoCC, we recognise that the growing climate emergency is a serious risk to the pursuit of our charitable aims. There is a special responsibility on foundations, whose assets are held for the public good, to use their resources and independence to rise to the challenge.
- 1.5. By signing up we commit to:
 - 1.5.1. Educate and learn

We will make opportunities for our trustees, staff, and stakeholders to learn more about the key causes and solutions of climate change.
 - 1.5.2. Commit resources

We will commit resources to accelerate work that addresses the causes and impacts of climate change. (If our governing document or other factors make it difficult to directly fund such work, we will find other ways to contribute, or consider how such barriers might be overcome).

1.5.3. Integrate

Within all our existing programmes, priorities, and processes, we will seek opportunities to contribute to a fair and lasting transition to a post carbon society, and to support adaptation to climate change impacts.

1.5.4. Steward our investments for a post carbon future

We will recognise climate change as a high-level risk to our investments, and therefore to our mission. Our investment manager will address the risks and opportunities of a transition to a post carbon economy in our investment strategy and its implementation, recognising that our decisions can contribute to this transition being achieved.

1.5.5. Decarbonise our operations

We will take ambitious action to minimise the carbon footprint of our own operations.

1.5.6. Report on progress

We will report annually on our progress against the five goals listed above. We will continue to develop our practice, to learn from others, and to share our learning. It is free to become a signatory.

- 1.6. We take our commitment to environmental sustainability very seriously and it is an important part of our culture as an organisation. It is also an important part of our commitment to our staff, Board, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders. Climate change and sustainability is one of the underlying principles of the RCN Foundations 5-year strategy 2024-2028. As per our strategy, we will commit to tackling the causes and impacts of climate change in our role as a charity, a grant-maker, and an employer.
- 1.7. This policy will be accompanied by a 5-year action plan which will highlight the steps we will take towards the six pillars of the Funder Commitment on Climate change and will be in line with our strategic objectives.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. This policy sets out the RCN Foundations commitment to continuous improvement in our actions to decrease our environmental impact. Caring for those we help means also caring for the environment they live in.
- 2.2. The purpose of this policy is to set out our commitment to align our actions and intentions with our charitable aims, by seeking to be environmentally sustainable in all that we do, and to address and mitigate the environmental consequences of our activities, grants, and investments.

3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy applies to all RCN Foundation stakeholders including Trustees, External Advisers, employees, contractors, suppliers, grant recipients, and RCN group members. The policy will be shared with suppliers to indicate our commitment to sustainability and to environmental and social action in support of sustainability. It can also be shared with other stakeholders, including applicants or organisations we fund, RCN Members and RCN Group staff. This policy will be on our website.

4. Impact

- 4.1. Our direct impact on the environment primarily relates to:
- 4.1.1. Our energy, material and water use at our premises, and travel by staff.
 - 4.1.2. What we choose to fund through our grant-making.
 - 4.1.3. Where we chose to invest.
- 4.2. We can also indirectly impact the environment by, for example:
- 4.2.1. Creating an annual environmental fund for nurses, midwives and healthcare support workers who are looking to develop sustainable practices, study sustainability and healthcare, fund innovative sustainable solutions.
 - 4.2.2. Create an annual research and innovation project fund for projects that address sustainability/climate change/net zero across healthcare, thus contributing towards reducing the 4.5% of Carbon emissions produced by the health sector.
 - 4.2.3. Celebrate those nursing and midwifery professionals who are making strides in sustainability with a HOPE Award at our Impact Awards.

5. Action

- 5.1. We are committed to accelerating a just transition to a carbon neutral, nature positive world through urgently reducing the impact from our operations, investments, and grant-making on the environment and society. In order to do this, we will understand where we are at right now as an organisation, what our current carbon missions are and based on that, adopt measurable goals for us going forward.
- 5.2. We will help achieve this through the following areas of work:

6. Staff engagement

- 6.1. We will promote responsibility for the environment within the organisation and communicate and implement this policy with the involvement of our entire team. We commit to ensuring members of staff have the time necessary to

embed this work into our operations and providing further resource as necessary.

- 6.2. The senior management leadership team (SLT) of the RCN Foundation will:
 - 6.2.1. Share its expectation of responsibility for the environment with all staff and Trustees.
 - 6.2.2. Demonstrate clear commitment to the environment and lead by example, to ensure that the protection of the environment is promoted to all employees.
 - 6.2.3. Support team wellbeing by committing to action in the organisation and setting a positive example.
- 6.3. The employees of the Foundation will:
 - 6.3.1. Be familiar with all the environmental requirements relevant to their role and responsibilities, including exploring the environmental and associated social impacts of specific areas of work.
 - 6.3.2. Take responsibility for their own impact on the environment while working on behalf of the RCN Foundation, sharing ideas with other staff members on how to reduce personal impact and take positive actions to enhance nature and reduce carbon emissions.
- 6.4. The Board of Trustees:
 - 6.4.1. Will support senior management and all staff in addressing the climate and sustainability crises.

7. Operations

- 7.1. As part of delivering our mission in line with our values and charitable aims, we will assess the environmental and associated social impacts of our operations and set objectives and targets annually in order to reduce our carbon emissions. We will review these targets annually. This work will include:
 - 7.1.1. Continuing to promote our values with stakeholders, including the fact that we are a signatory of the Funder Commitment on Climate Change (FCoCC)
 - 7.1.2. Adopting the waste management hierarchy, minimising our waste first and foremost and thereafter reusing then recycling resources as much as possible.
 - 7.1.3. Reviewing our waste management practices and educate employees about effective reduction, reuse and recycling of consumables and other materials including single use plastic.
 - 7.1.4. Adopting the carbon management hierarchy in relation to travel for business. Promoting and encouraging low carbon travel choices from

employees and Trustees including a conscious consideration of the amount of travel necessary to deliver our work.

- 7.1.5. Providing training for employees and Trustees and attending events on the interlinked climate change and biodiversity loss crises.
- 7.1.6. Work together with the RCN and RCNi to develop a group Sustainability and Climate Change policy.
- 7.1.7. Communicate with the nursing and midwifery communities we work with about the climate and environment crises and how it is relevant to our mission, vision, and values.
- 7.1.8. Increasing external communications about the climate crisis, to encourage awareness within our networks and the communities we work with.
- 7.1.9. Complying with all relevant environmental legislation and regulations.

8. Governance

- 8.1. Our Trustees have overall responsibility for the RCN Foundation and its strategy and are committed to our response to the climate change and biodiversity loss crises, including in relation to our beneficiaries and stakeholders. The work should include:
 - 8.1.1. Discussing how our mission, vision and values intersect with the climate and biodiversity crises. This discussion should include how our beneficiaries will be affected by the crisis; where there is opportunity to collaborate and support wider climate and nature-positive action in healthcare settings; and how to embed climate and nature-positive actions in our strategy and business planning.
 - 8.1.2. Providing a short statement in our annual report each year outlining the progress we have made in pursuit of our climate and biodiversity crises responses including any action we have taken, alongside our aims for the following business year.
 - 8.1.3. Reviewing, and keeping under review, our investment policy to ensure it is aligned with this policy.

9. Procurement

- 9.1. As a small organisation, the RCN Foundation is not a significant purchaser of supplies. Where practical our engagement with suppliers is designed to identify those with values which align with our own, and we will make clear our preference to work with organisations who minimise their environmental impact wherever possible. When we make purchases, we also look to select items which can be re-used where possible. We will make public our preference to work with organisations who are demonstrably and actively

minimising their adverse environmental and associated social impacts. We are part of the RCN Group, and to this end, we will be using suppliers that are often procured by the group.

9.2. We will ask our suppliers to:

9.2.1. Share their environmental sustainability policies with us before we enter into any contract or agreement as a part of our due diligence processes.

9.2.2. Work with us to reduce the adverse environmental, and associated social, impacts of the goods and services procured.

10. Organisations we fund

10.1 We will ask our grant applicants to:

10.1.1 Share their environmental sustainability policies (or, at the very least, clearly outline planned actions if a formal policy is not in place) with documentation supplied at the second stage of our application process.

10.1.2 Be willing to discuss their environmental, and associated social, impacts together with mitigation strategies and/or barriers to mitigation.

11. Policy Review

11.1. This policy will be reviewed, in line with the Policy Framework document, every three years or sooner if legislation, best practice or other circumstances indicate this is necessary.