



# HOW-TO...

## Prioritise Plant-Based & Sustainably Sourced Food



**UK Health Alliance  
on Climate Change**



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*"Food is the single strongest lever to optimize human health and environmental sustainability on earth." EAT Lancet Commission, 2009*



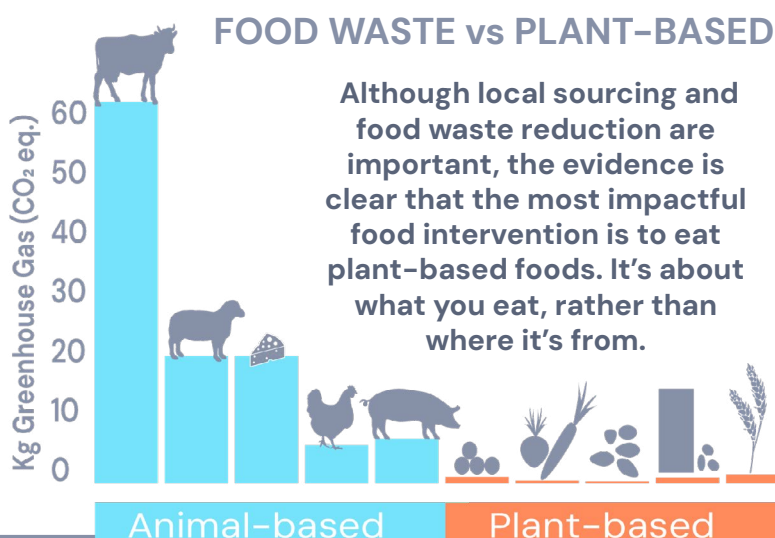
### Health professionals need to show climate leadership by applying the same due diligence to food as we do other areas of our work.

The evidence is clear. Plant-based, sustainably sourced food offers the greatest benefits to planetary and human health; when done well, it is nutritious, delicious and culturally inclusive.

Prioritising plant-based, sustainably sourced food is one of UK Health Alliance on Climate Change's (UKHACC) eleven member commitments. This toolkit will help members to not only achieve this commitment, but also gain Climate & Healthcare scorecard points and meet recommendations from UKHACC's [Building A Healthy & Sustainable Food System report](#).

It includes practical steps, know-how, case studies and templates to help your organisation successfully champion a plant-based food culture. **Let's go.**

## ANIMAL Vs PLANT-BASED FOODS



### THE DATA

For a quick comparison, producing 1kg of beef emits 60kg of greenhouse gases (measured as carbon dioxide equivalents, or CO<sub>2</sub> eq.). 1kg of lamb and cheese emits 20kg of CO<sub>2</sub> eq. and chicken and pork emit 6 and 7kg respectively.

Plant-based foods have comparatively low emissions. Producing 1kg of peas emits about 1kg of CO<sub>2</sub> eq., wheat or rye around 1.4kg, root vegetables 0.4kg, nuts 0.3kg, and soya milk 0.9kg.



# THE WHY

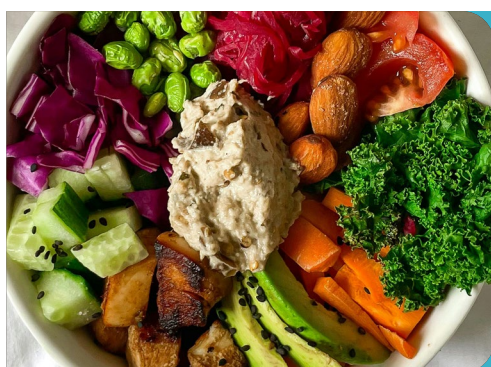


## SUPPORTS BETTER HEALTH

A diet high in fibre-rich foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds and legumes supports better physical and mental health adding healthy years to life. Eating more plant-based foods reduces the risk of a number of chronic conditions; including heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, obesity, certain cancers. In 2020, 70,000 deaths in the UK were associated with insufficient intake of nutritious plant-based foods.

## POTENTIAL COST SAVINGS

Plant-based meals have the potential to substantially reduce catering costs if you concentrate on whole food ingredients and protein such as pulses, beans, and legumes. Meat and dairy replacement products of high quality are useful, but are not as cost effective as pulses.



## RELIGIOUS, CULTURAL AND DIETARY INCLUSIVITY

A plant-based diet is the most inclusive diet. It's the diet that meets the widest variety of religious, cultural and dietary needs and therefore removes the need to have lots of different options. This provides meal parity and togetherness as everyone can eat the same thing.

## EXCEL & INSPIRE

Adopting a plant-based food culture is one of the most impactful things you can do to reduce carbon emissions. Even if your organisation holds infrequent in-person meetings, do not underestimate the impact of adopting a plant-based food culture and its impact on your members.





# THE WHY



## ROUTE TO NET ZERO

The NHS has committed to net-zero emissions by 2045. Food and catering contribute 6% to the NHS's total emissions. Shifting the food culture at organisations of medical excellence will influence healthcare professionals to make these changes in their workplaces. More than 50% of greenhouse gas emissions from the global food system come from animal-sourced foods. In the UK, 70% of emissions from farming arise from the production of red meat and dairy.

## SAVES WATER & LAND

A typical plant-based meal uses 75% less land, 50% less water, and has a 66% lower impact on biodiversity loss than an animal-based meal. Counterintuitively, many internationally sourced plant-based ingredients have a lower overall environmental impact than food from locally-sourced farmed animal products. When assessing food's climate impact you have to consider its entire production process from seed to plate, not just its provenance and food miles.



## RESTORES BIODIVERSITY



Agriculture is the leading cause of biodiversity loss on land, and in our rivers and oceans. Plant-based foods use significantly less natural resources and create less water, land and air pollution. Serving more plant-based meals will help restore our natural ecosystems.



# How to do it

Change takes persistence, dedication and champions to make it happen. Follow this process to successfully adopt a plant-based, sustainably sourced food culture.



# 1

## GATHER SUPPORT

**Change is best implemented when there's a group of people driving it forward.**

Sustainability Special Interest Groups (SIGS) and sustainability leads/chairs are essential for success.

# 2

## GET SENIOR LEADERSHIP ONBOARD

**Get your organisation's senior leadership onboard.**

Explain why you're proposing this approach e.g. to reduce the organisation's environmental impact, be climate leaders, be more inclusive, to meet UKHACCs 11 commitments and meet requirements of the Climate and Health scorecard.

# 3

## CREATE A POLICY

**Co-create a sustainable food policy and/or a sustainable events/sustainability policy with a food section.** It does not need to be long, 1-2 pages can be sufficient.

# 4

## SET TARGETS

Your policy should include specific targets and when you hope to achieve them. **Be specific, ambitious and clear.**

# 5

## AGREE TIMELINES

To ensure momentum your working group should **agree timelines for the creation, feedback, sign off and implementation** of your new food policy.

# 6

## DEVELOP A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

How change is embraced often comes down to how it's been communicated. **Develop a strategy for how you communicate about your new food policy to your organisation's team and members.**

# 7

## EVALUATE & CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Once you've started implementing your food policy; **gather feedback, evaluate and be prepared to improve as you go.** Celebrate your successes and impact and be honest about challenges.



# Your Food Policy

You can include a food section in your organisations Sustainability or Sustainable Events policy, or create a dedicated Sustainable Food policy. A dedicated 1–2 page food policy is the most comprehensive approach, but brief additions to existing policies can also be impactful.



Photo, catering and events by Seeds Of Wild



In [The Physiological Society's Sustainability Policy](#) they include one line in the events section stating,

**"We will reduce our carbon footprint by selecting vegetarian meal options and avoid single-use plastic."**

In contrast the [Faculty Of Public Health's Sustainability Policy](#) for Events has a **6 bullet point section dedicated to catering** that includes being single-use and plastic free; food should be plant-based and meat-free; carbon footprint labels should be displayed if possible; and catering companies should be prioritised that use fair trade, source locally and have strategies for reducing food waste.





# WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICY



## 1 Your Commitment

Be clear about what your commitment is. Choose from the options below.

### Our food is...

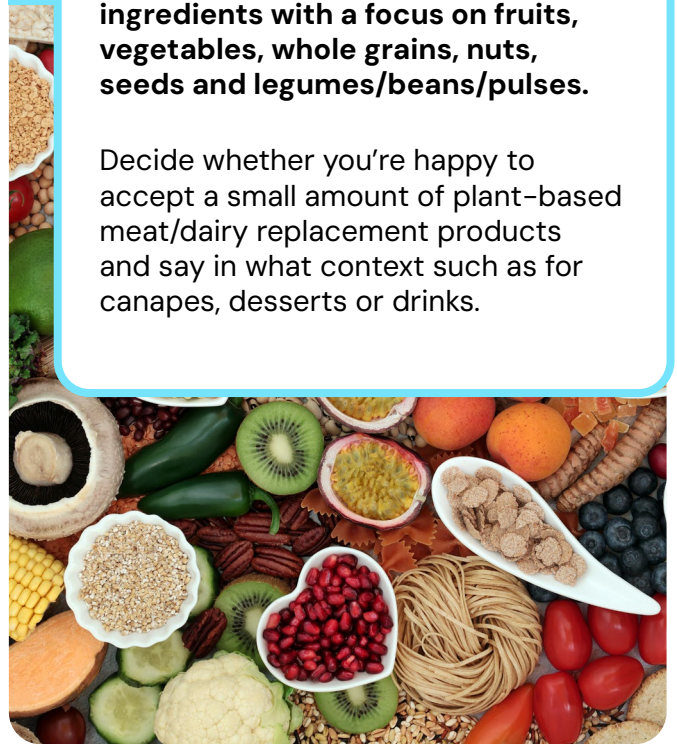
- **100% plant-based**
- **Plant-based by default** (100% plant-based but with opt-ins for meat, fish and dairy)
- **Plant-based, meat-free**
- **\*Free from red and processed meats**

\*This is a bare minimum for a sustainable food policy.

## 2 Prioritise Whole Foods

State you prioritise whole food ingredients with a focus on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds and legumes/beans/pulses.

Decide whether you're happy to accept a small amount of plant-based meat/dairy replacement products and say in what context such as for canapes, desserts or drinks.



## 3 Plant Milks

**Make a commitment to offering plant milks** such as fortified, unsweetened soya or oat milk, either as options, or, more impactfully, as the default with dairy milk available on request.



## 4 Nutritionally Balanced

Make a statement about the food you offer being **health supporting and nutritionally balanced**. You can link to the [Plant-Based Eatwell Guide](#) for reference.



# WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A SUSTAINABLE FOOD POLICY



## 5

### Language

**Have a position on using positive, inclusive language on communications about catering.**

Use of phrases such as meat-free/vegetarian/vegan in a policy document is OK as its specific terminology, but don't use it in general communications.

## 6

### Labelling – Carbon Footprint & Dietary

Prioritise and request caterers **use carbon footprint labelling** where possible and **use subtle dietary indicators** such as V, Ve, GF to denote Vegetarian, Vegan and Gluten-Free without using the whole word as it's known to put off people who don't subscribe to these dietary choices.

## 7

### Sourcing

**Have a position on sourcing.**

You may wish to prioritise working with caterers who source locally, use Fairtrade products, support small independent businesses, are social enterprises or charities, or are founded by a person of a marginalised identity.

## 8

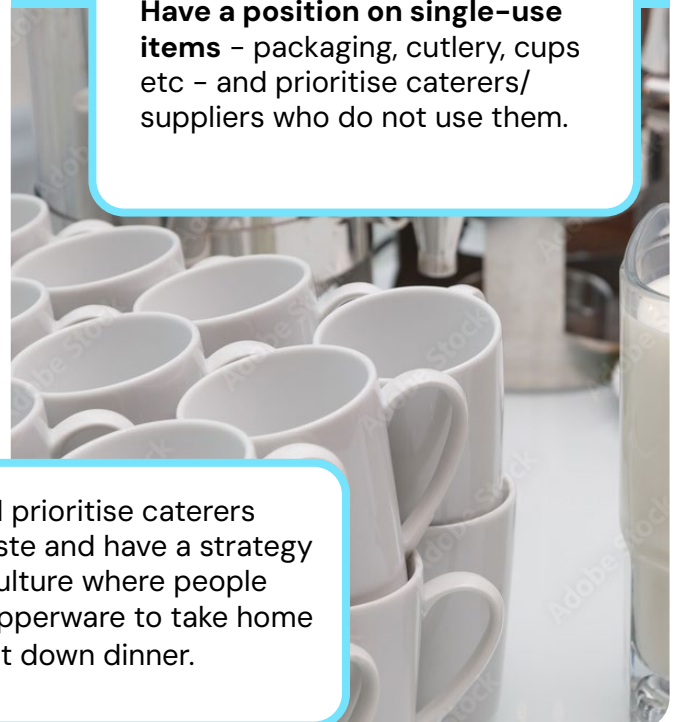
### Packaging & Single-Use

**Have a position on single-use items** – packaging, cutlery, cups etc – and prioritise caterers/ suppliers who do not use them.

## 9

### Food Waste

**Have a position on food waste** and prioritise caterers that are committed to reducing waste and have a strategy for achieving this. Develop a food culture where people are actively encouraged to bring tupperware to take home left-overs whether it's a buffet or sit down dinner.





# Communications Strategy

The best way to bring everyone along on a plant-based transition is to be excited, positive and clear about the reasons for adopting this approach.



Communicate about your new food policy, menu or catering choice across all organisational channels such as staff intranets, notice boards, event invites, newsletters and in meetings. This ensures no one is taken by surprise, but instead understands and is aware of the reasons for this change.



All communications should create the feeling of an exciting, enjoyable and progressive evolution that everyone wants to get onboard with.



# Communications Strategy

## LANGUAGE MATTERS

- DO** Use **positive words** such as **plant-rich**, **planet friendly** or **proudly plant-based**.
- DO** Ensure the food is described in ways that focus on **taste**, **texture** and **provenance**.
- DO** Describe the **benefits** such as being inclusive, health supporting, cost effective and the most sustainable choice for the planet.

**Do use inspiring, positive, inclusive language** to explain why you're adopting this approach. Confidence and positivity is infectious.

**Do share positive feedback** about the food or new food approach.

### DON'T

Use judgmental words or make people feel negatively about their personal food choices.

### DON'T

Use language on comms that indicates you are worried or anxious about this food transition and how it will be received.

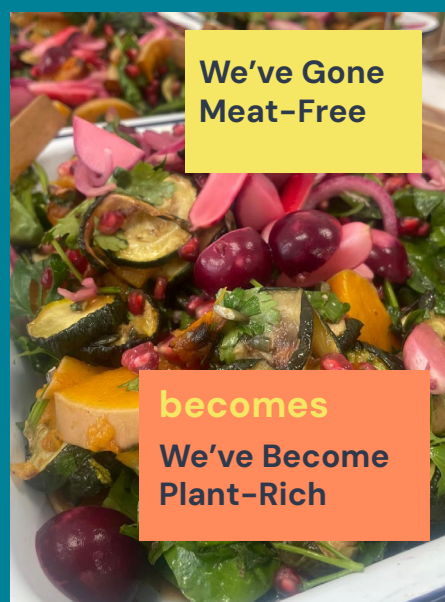
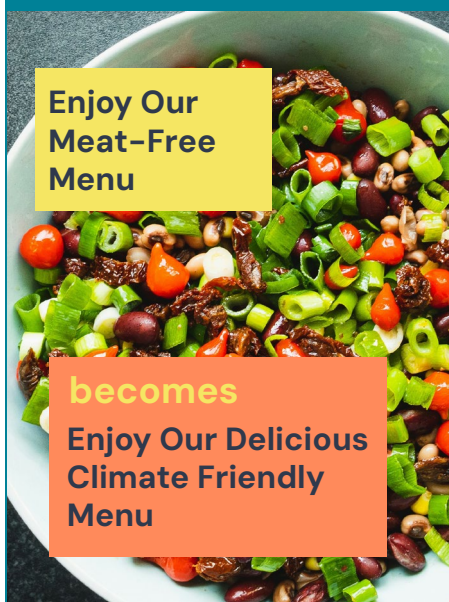
### DON'T

Use words like **vegetarian**, **vegan**, **meat-free** and **meat-less** – people feel they're being denied something or having something foisted upon them.

### DON'T

Overly focus on 1-2 complaints about a lack of meat. Offer opt-ins for people who insist they must have meat/fish.

## LANGUAGE EXAMPLES





# TEMPLATES



## For Website/Social Media/Newsletter Announcement – General Food Policy

### **The XXXXX Is Proud To Share Its New Sustainable Food Policy.**

As part of our commitment to be climate leaders in the healthcare space we have developed a new sustainable food policy. This initiative is an inclusive approach to food that will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, is better for the environment, and supports the health of our team and members.

**You can read our sustainable food policy [here](#).**

## Email Template For A Specific Event/Workshop

### **We are proud to share that we will be offering a menu that focuses on sustainability and inclusivity at our forthcoming annual AGM.**

The delicious, nutritious menu will reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, is better for the environment, and supports us to make healthy food choices.

### **This approach is part of the XXXX's commitment to be climate leaders in the healthcare space.**

A menu will be circulated by XXX by XXXX. If you need to make a special dietary request or opt-in for a meal with meat and/or dairy please let us know by XXXXXX.

## Email Template About Meeting Culture

### **We are proud to announce we are adopting a plant-based food policy for all in-person meetings.**

The idea was tabled by the XXXX SIG at the start of the year and meat-free\* meetings have been successfully trialled throughout the summer.

The focus on plant-rich meals made eating together more inclusive, cost effective and inspired staff to try new cuisines and recipes, and increase their intake of health supporting, fibre-rich plant-based foods.

As part of our commitment to be climate leaders we are delighted to be rolling out this initiative.

\*If people bring their own food to meetings specifying meat-free is important for clarity. If food is ordered in by a coordinator, you can use the phrase plant-based/plant- rich.



# GETTING THE FOOD RIGHT

Now you've got a sustainable food policy – you need to ensure the food served at your events is delicious, nutritious, and well received.



## 10 TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Follow our **Ten Tips For Success** and prepare to eat some seriously delicious plant-based food.

### TIP 1

#### Get The Right Caterer



**If you're employing caterers or ordering in boxed meals, ensure they have a varied, appealing plant-rich menu. If they have one or two options, they're not the right choice.**

**Do a google search** of vegetarian, vegan or plant-based caterers to find specialist suppliers (and check the reviews) or suppliers with a dedicated plant-based menu. If you're using a venue with their own catering team, use these tips to collaboratively produce the right plant-based menu for your event.

**Ask to see photos, menus and reviews** of plant-based events they've previously catered for.

Don't feel you have to accept the first menu they send. Give feedback and work with them to develop a bespoke menu that works for your event attendees, the season and your budget.

**Get in touch as far ahead in advance as possible** with a detailed brief so the catering team has time to prepare the right menu for you.

**Over-played plant-based meals include** stuffed peppers, risotto, hummus and roasted vegetable wraps and tomato pasta. If your caterer only offers these options, this is a red flag!

**Ask the caterer to ensure the serving staff are onboard with your positive plant-based messaging and don't offer misinformed views while serving. Believe us – it happens!!!**

#### SAMPLE CATERERS BRIEF

**Examples Of Caterers With Quality Plant-Rich Menus**

[University College London](#)  
[Wellcome Trust Events](#)  
[Kings College London](#)

### TIP 2

#### The Right Food, For The Right Season



**Your plant-based menu/ food offer should be satiating and seasonally appropriate.** Few people want to eat cold salads in the winter and hearty stews in the summer. Look out for this. For segway seasons, ensure there are hot and cold food options.





# GETTING THE FOOD RIGHT

## TIP 3

### Satisfaction Guaranteed



A classic mistake of inexperienced plant-based caterers is to offer high water content salads and veg dishes without enough protein or carbohydrate, which leaves people hungry. Ensure portions are large enough and meals are nutritionally balanced. Refer to the [Plant-Based Eatwell Guide](#) for support. A colourful meal is indicative of a nutritionally varied meal, and is also a feast for the eyes.



## TIP 4

### That's Not A Dessert

Fresh fruit albeit the healthiest choice does not constitute a **dessert**. Desserts such as cakes, mousse, tarts and pastries are all easy to make plant-based. Don't accept just fruit.

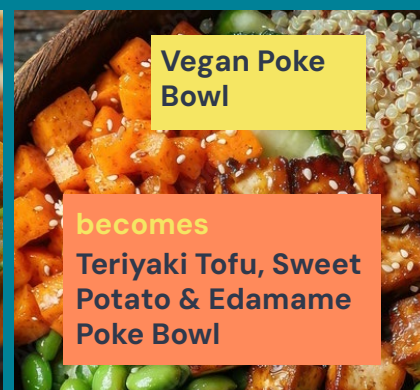
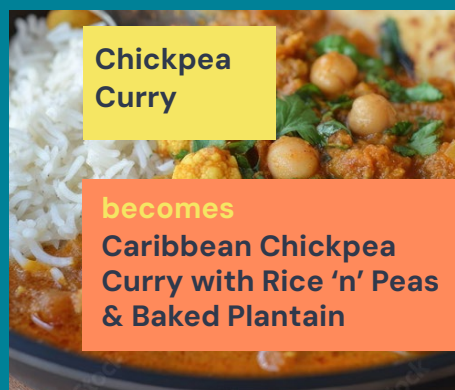
## Language Matters

## TIP 5

Avoid phrases such as Vegetarian, Vegan, Meat-Less in menu and dish descriptions. Instead focus on taste, texture and provenance.

Appeal to the senses with phrases like hearty, umami, fresh or zingy. Dishes should be labelled to ensure serving staff describe them correctly..

## Dish Name Examples





# GETTING THE FOOD RIGHT

## TIP 6

### Up Front

As mentioned in the policy section, whether designing a menu, listing options on an email or arranging a food service counter, plant-based options should be presented first. The aim is for people to fill up on all the plant-based dishes and if meat or dairy is available it's treated like a garnish. **If you start with the plant-based options, more people will choose them.**



## TIP 7

### Be Protein Aware



Although it's easy to get enough protein on a varied, plant-based diet, some caterers fail to provide enough protein as part of their plant-based options. **Ensure protein-rich plant-based foods are available such as beans, legumes, tofu, edamame, quinoa, tempeh, nuts and seeds.**

## TIP 8

### Comforting Classics, Familiar Flavours & International Cuisine



**Plant-based versions of comfort classics with familiar flavours have universal appeal, as do international cuisines with rich plant-based culinary heritages like Thai, Indian, Italian and Mexican. When using specialist plant-based ingredients ensure chefs are experienced using them as if prepared wrong they can be bland and off putting.**

## TIP 9

### Not All Replacement Products Are Created Equal

**Not all plant-based dairy and faux meat/fish items are created equal** with taste, texture and quality varying massively. If your menu includes a small amount of these products, make sure the chefs have used them previously and received good reviews.



## TIP 10

### Condiments & Dressings

Some caterers have good plant-based options **but have failed or forgotten to offer plant-based condiments, dressings and sauces**, leaving the plant-based options lacking in flavour or feeling incomplete. Be aware of this and endeavour to check in advance.







# ADDRESSING BARRIERS & CHALLENGES



## Trialled Once, Went Badly

We've heard about debut plant-based events where the food hasn't been good and this has put people off. Using the advice in this toolkit, will ensure your second effort is a success. **Be upfront that you agree the food wasn't good last time and you've endeavoured to ensure the catering is fantastic this time.** There are always bumps on any journey of change. Be resilient and go again.

## Worried About Complaints

With any journey of change, a few concerns/complaints are to be expected so don't let it derail you. **Remember your why** – you're creating an inclusive, sustainable, health supporting plant-based food culture so your organisation can be a climate leader. **Collect feedback to get a balanced view** and ensure a few negative voices don't drown out the majority of positive ones.

## Freedom Of Choice

A plant-forward food culture meets more religious and cultural requirements than any other diet, and meets most dietary needs. **To preserve freedom of choice your menu could be plant-based by default. This means food is standardly plant-based but people are offered the choice to opt-in for meat, fish, dairy and eggs.**

## No Support From Members

People support change when it's presented in a positive light with convincing data, prior explanation and when it is well executed (e.g. the food is good) so the change doesn't negatively impact them. **Sometimes it's not a case of asking, but telling people in advance that a change is happening. Be inspiring and upbeat.**

## Senior Leadership

Every organisation's senior leadership/senior leadership culture is different. **Approach your senior leadership respectfully** via the appropriate channels with a solid rationale, and with data, for why you and your colleagues want to make this change. **Follow protocol** for getting new projects or motions passed. Offer to **do a presentation** and be persistent if you don't get support straight away. When they see this topic (and you) are not going away, they're likely to agree to a trial.

## Limitations Of Venue/Supplier

If you're bound to a specific caterer that doesn't have a quality plant-based offer, **collaboration will be key** to inspire them to develop one. Meet to discuss their current offer and find out what the challenges are to developing a more plant-forward menu. Make it clear this request is not a one off but if it goes well will be a long term requirement. Highlight the growing demand for plant-based events/dishes so getting onboard now will benefit their future business.

# SUPPORT

## TALKS & PRESENTATIONS



A number of survey respondents said a talk from an expert would be beneficial for their organisation to adopt a plant-based food culture. The team at [\*\*Plant-Based Health Professionals UK \(PBHP UK\)\*\*](#), Dr Shireen Kassam, Sarah Bentley and Dr Laura-Jane Smith, are available for talks on the topic of positive food culture transformation.

Enquire at: [sarah@pbhp.uk](mailto:sarah@pbhp.uk)  
[shireen@pbhp.uk](mailto:shireen@pbhp.uk)

## PROFESSIONAL CONSULTANCY

For additional help or consultancy you can reach out to.

[\*\*Made In Hackney\*\*](#)  
Maura Strumendo, Plant Prospects Manager  
[mauro@madeinhackney.org](mailto:mauro@madeinhackney.org)



## PEER SUPPORT

Many of the healthcare professionals whose work, policies and experiences have been documented in this toolkit are happy to connect with fellow healthcare professionals to share their experiences and offer expertise. **Get in touch at:**

**Sarah Bentley & Dr Shireen Kassam, PBHP UK**  
[sarah@pbhp.uk](mailto:sarah@pbhp.uk) [shireen@pbhp.uk](mailto:shireen@pbhp.uk)

**Beth Griffiths, ecoSAM Lead, Society Of Acute Medicine**  
[ecosam@acutemedicine.org.uk](mailto:ecosam@acutemedicine.org.uk)

**Zahra Shehabi, Chair of Environmental and Sustainability Working Group at ADH**  
[z.shehabi@nhs.net](mailto:z.shehabi@nhs.net)

**Rosie Pearce, Senior Policy Officer, Dental Hospital Association**  
[rosie.pearce@dentalhospitals.org.uk](mailto:rosie.pearce@dentalhospitals.org.uk)

**Cat Pinho-Gomes, Co-leads the implementation of the Climate & Health Strategy with the Climate & Health Committee, Faculty of Public Health**  
[cat.pinho-gomes@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:cat.pinho-gomes@kcl.ac.uk)

**Isabella Williams, Senior Food Strategist and Programme Lead, Real Zero**  
[isabellaWilliams@realzero.earth](mailto:isabellaWilliams@realzero.earth)



# HOW TO

## MAP ACTIONS AGAINST C&H SCORE CARD



The Climate and Health Scorecard is a tool used to assess progress towards delivering the UKHACC Commitments.

The following questions are used to assess progress against the commitment to 'Prioritise plant-based and sustainably sourced food'.

**1** Does your organisation have a target for increasing the proportion of the food that it serves that is plant-based and locally-sourced? (0.5 points)



**2** Does your organisation always offer a plant-based option on site and at conferences/meetings? (0.5 points)



**3** Has your organisation removed red meat from its menus, both in house and at catered events? (0.5 points)



**4** Does your organisation display carbon and environmental impact labels on its food and menus? (0.5 points)



Find out more about the scorecard including the complete questionnaire and previous reports at [Climate & Health Scorecard](#)





# LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

## BIG EVENTS

with Rosie Pearce, Senior Policy Officer at the Association Of Dental Hospitals (ADH)



"The ADH has an annual in-person meeting. The last one held in April at the Royal College Of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow was our first entirely plant-based event. Overall I'd say it was a great success. Myself and Zahra Shehabi, Chair of ADH's Environmental and Sustainability Working Group (ESWG), proposed it to be meat-free and got it approved by the ADH Chair Dr Navdeep Kumar. We also approached the host organisation in Glasgow and checked they'd be fine with it.

**It's important to have buy-in from senior leadership and for people to feel consulted and informed why the ESWG wanted to take this approach as a way of reducing the environmental impact of the event.**

We had about 40 attendees – dentists, dental nurses, clinical directors, dental surgeons – and everyone seemed to enjoy the food and gave good feedback. As it was April and you never know what the weather will be like, we had a mixture of hot and cold buffet items – samosas, barji's, spring rolls, different fillings for sandwiches and wraps. As it was a buffet people could take as much or as little as they wanted.

**People felt satiated and most importantly it was all beautifully presented so it felt fancy and special.**

We gave the host venue lots of warning that we wanted an entirely plant-based menu. They were happy to deliver it and we're fine with making tweaks to their first proposed menu as we felt it needed a bit more variety.

**I'm glad we gave that feedback as it definitely made the food better.**

Even the dessert was nice – rather than fresh fruit which although healthy is a bit of a cop-out – we had a little plant-based pastry case with cream and fruit on top. Cost wise it wasn't any cheaper than a meat-based menu as they had to order things in specially for us – but if they did more fully plant-based events the cost would likely come down. Overall lots of people said they liked the food and enjoyed having something a bit different so I hope we do the same next year and can make it a permanent approach to our big meetings once we've proved it can be well received and successful a couple of years in a row.

**It might only be an annual event, but it's symbolic and important to show the ADH is taking all aspects of sustainability seriously, including food."**



# LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

## RESIDENTIALS

With Dr Bethan Griffiths, consultant in Acute Medicine at Mid Cheshire Hospitals NHS trust and Eco Society Of Acute Medicine lead

“We ran a three-day residential course with 25 attendees and had a vegetarian food policy. All meals were cooked together, which made a single, plant-based menu more inclusive – **it meant we didn’t need to accommodate separate dishes for different cultural, religious, or dietary requirements. It also significantly reduced food costs to under £500 which is less than £2.50 per person per meal, and helped keep the event’s carbon footprint as low as possible.**

As the sustainability lead for SAM and residential course lead, I first shared the rationale for a vegetarian food policy with the rest of the course organisers. Once we agreed this approach would have benefit, I brought the proposal to the SAM Council for discussion. It wasn’t a formal vote and not everyone had to agree, but it was important to have open dialogue and ensure there was general support. I consulted the SAM directors, who ultimately gave their approval and I felt supported in making sustainability a key part of the course planning.

In terms of the attendees it was important to communicate in advance that this decision was rooted in our commitment to climate-conscious practices. It was included in pre course information, was mentioned in a teams call for attendees the week before, and on the first morning during the introduction session. We kept it positive saying we were providing balanced meals with sustainability and inclusivity in mind as opposed to saying ‘no meat’.



**By setting expectations early, we ensured everyone was on board, and they were! No one asked for meat or raised concerns, and I believe that was due to the clear and thoughtful advance messaging.**

Preparing food together was not only fun but also a powerful way to build community. People from a range of backgrounds shared their favourite plant-based dishes and cooking tips, sparking rich conversations beyond our usual work talk. We learned a lot about each other over the chopping boards and stovetops.

Breakfasts included cereal, toast, yoghurt (plant-based or dairy), fruit, and free-range eggs. Lunches featured mezze, flatbreads, pakoras, and hummus. Dinners were hearty and satisfying, with pasta and fresh vegetables one night, and a delicious vegetarian chilli (with all the toppings!) on another.

**We’re proud to say there was no food waste.**

Leftovers were reused in subsequent meals, and at the end of the course, people took home what remained in tupperware, while unopened items were donated to a local food bank. It was a great success. When we proposed the idea some people worried it would have a negative impact on the course and feedback, but the reality was that there wasn’t and actually it made things much simpler!

We don’t want a plant-rich menu to be a one-off, we’re working to build it into our wider sustainability approach. We published an Environment Policy Statement and are part of the Climate and Health Scorecard Initiative, which rewards reducing the carbon footprint of food at events. We’re starting with smaller events to trial plant-based catering, show the benefits, and gather feedback.

**The plan is to build on what works and scale up to larger events. This is part of our broader aim to make all SAM events lower carbon, more inclusive, and more sustainable.”**



# LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

## MEETINGS

With Dr Zahra Shehabi, Consultant in Special Care Dentistry, Clinical Sustainability Fellow for Dentistry, Chair of Environmental and Sustainability Working Group at ADH



"Dental hospitals are different to mainstream hospitals as we don't usually have any on site patient catering and often no staff catering either. This means staff bring in their own food or buy from the local area. Bearing that in mind, in my role as Environmental and Sustainable Working Group Chair, I wanted to encourage staff to have a meat-free day a week, starting with Mondays. I got the approval of the ADH Chair and then touched base with Meat-Free Mondays and they were happy for me to use their logo on posters.

**Half the poster promoted carbon and water savings of having a meat-free day along with other environmental statistics, and the other half was meat-free food swap suggestions which people said were very helpful.**

**We started disseminating the posters to different meeting groups and it got widespread support and people started to select specific, important upcoming meetings to go meat-free – not just on Mondays.**

Our communications officer then helped design an ADH Meat-Free Meetings poster to promote the initiative as a wider part of our association meeting culture. We took it one step further and Rosie, our policy officer at the ADH ensured that the catering at the face to face annual meeting was meat-free in order to inspire a trickle-down effect and allow people affiliated with different specialist societies to adopt the same approach. I work across many different societies and groups and I find when it comes to sustainable food many groups are willing to do local, seasonal and reduce food waste, but don't want to consider going plant-based."

**"By getting people to try it and for it to become normalised, attitudes will gradually change. The evidence is there. We just now need the collective will."**





## LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

### A VENUE'S POINT OF VIEW

With Maeve Kilcullen, Conference and Events Coordinator & Richie Holmes, Operations Manager at the Royal College Of Physicians & Surgeons Glasgow



**"Plant-based events are something we'll see more requests for and we need to be ready."**

"We've done two solely plant-based events now – an internal event on sustainability and one for a medical association. The food at both events went down a storm. I think this was down to the creativity, variety and seasonality our catering team applied. They embraced the concept and has time to innovate and try new things.

**The key to success is time to prepare.**

In the past, dedicated plant-based training wasn't included in culinary courses, it certainly wasn't when I did my training, so the chefs are learning on the job. They need time to write and tweak the menus in advance.

If I'm honest, in the past our plant-based offer was lacking. We did some options but they weren't inspiring. Crafting dishes that appeal to everyone was a fresh challenge, and my head chef along with the rest of his team responded magnificently. The brief was to create an exciting and varied menu that replicates the quality of what the other diners are getting.

**It's no longer an afterthought but a key part of the team's repertoire. It's an evolution and we're still learning different plant-based culinary techniques all the time. It's interesting and enjoyable. The plant-based options are now at the top of the menus with names that appeal to everyone. That's made a difference as more people are ordering them.**

I don't have the data but I know my kitchen team are ordering more plant-based stock than we used to. Cost wise we're not seeing any savings yet as we can't order in the same bulk quantities, but eventually, I could see it saving money. If people want a plant-based menu with opt-ins for meat and dairy we could cater to that. It wouldn't propose a challenge as long as we had advance warning."



# LEARNING FROM EACH OTHER

## THE STANDARD OFFER

With Faculty Of Public Health's (FPH) Cat Pinho-Gomes, Implementation Co-lead of the Climate & Health Strategy for the Climate & Health Committee, & Georgia Harris, Policy Coordinator

"In 2024 we developed a Sustainability Policy for events that stipulated, 'All food at events should be plant-based and meat-free' amongst other criteria relating to single use items and food waste.

**The policy was signed off easily by the board as we have a long standing commitment to sustainability and decarbonising everything related to transport and food.**

There was no disagreement, everyone was happy with the policy when it was proposed. Most people who work at FPH are already vegetarian, vegan or plant-based with a low meat intake, which makes it easier. There are occasionally a few comments, like 'oh no meat', but this is the policy so this is how we cater for our events. That's it, full stop.



Photo, catering and events by Seeds Of Wild



Photo, catering and events by Seeds Of Wild

**The food at our events usually gets good feedback, looks very appealing and no one leaves hungry.**

There's usually good plant-based dessert options but a few caterers still rely too much on fresh fruit as a vegan option. We don't have many in-person events a year but when we do they're often at venues with good existing plant-based menus such as University College London, the Kings Fund and the Wellcome Trust. They all have catering teams very experienced in creating great plant-based dishes. Working with different venues and catering teams for each event has never been a problem or a barrier. We just tell them what we want and they deliver it. It's all been very smooth."

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