

Carbon Literacy for Primary Care

What is the impact of becoming carbon literate?

Summary

Carbon Literacy for Healthcare training is an important educational course with tangible actions leading to actions which reduce carbon emissions.

All successful participants (certified as Carbon Literate) felt they had been successful in reducing their carbon footprint, as well as the majority of those who hadn't been certified.

All recommended Carbon Literacy for Healthcare training, with comments on enjoyability, being informative, interesting and thought provoking with good facilitation of training.

Introduction

The Carbon Literacy Project (CLP) has been working for over a decade on creating sector specific toolkits. Within each sector, participants have been able to create, develop and deliver their own specialised course through an approval CLP process.

In 2020, a Carbon Literacy for Healthcare course was created by the Carbon Literacy Project in conjunction with a variety of keen, knowledgeable and enthusiastic authors from across healthcare.

One further course was developed specifically for primary healthcare staff. This consists of two online modules and a peer-to-peer workshop.

The first module is free and available at <https://seesustainability.co.uk/health-cl-module-1> and covers the more basic science applicable to all.

Module 2 is the paid-for element and available at <https://seesustainability.co.uk/health-cl-module-2-pay>. This covers carbon emissions from healthcare and specifically primary care. The baseline knowledge is then built upon at the workshop where action pledges are created.

Between summer 2020 and winter 2023, the first online Carbon Literacy for Primary Care Module 1 video had been viewed nearly 1000 times.

Over 200 primary care staff have attended a course and workshop with over 150 becoming certified as Carbon Literate.

In Jan 2024, a survey was sent to previous course attendees. One version went to those successfully certified asking the impact the course had had and if they had kept to their pledges and reduced their carbon footprint. A second version went to those who had attended the course but not submitted a pledge form.

Results From Surveys

For those individuals certified as Carbon Literate

n= 14 (Response rate 9%)

When? The majority - nearly 80% - received their training in 2023.

Key learning. Aim to ask attendees a year after they were certified how they are doing with achieving their pledges.

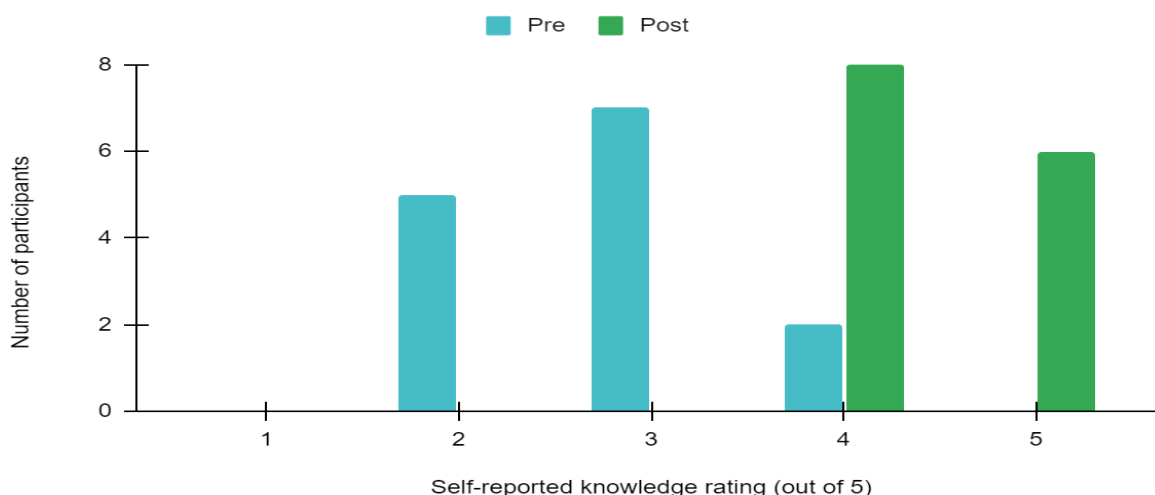
Funding - who paid?

The majority - over 80% - were funded by another source, agency or organisation. Some organisations had successfully bid for funding e.g. PCN, or lottery funding. Others were from parent organisations or employers.

Key learning. While self-funded participants have a vested financial interest to complete the course and pledge forms, those who are put forward by employers.

Knowledge increased for all

Knowledge Pre and Post Training



Action Pledge outcomes

Most people felt they were at least 'partially successful' in achieving their pledges. The most successes were in:

Transport

- Car sharing/ reduction in car use/ Electric car, Reduced flying and Bike maintenance

Energy

- Reduction in non-renewable electricity use

Assessment of the practice baseline carbon footprint

- Auditing/ Carbon footprinting practice

Changes to clinical practice

- Changing inhalers/ promotion of inhaler changes

Diet

- Diet changes to more fruit and veg/fewer animals.

Barriers to actioning pledges.

- Time
- Unreliability of public transport (for travel actions)
- Engagement of staff/ interested parties.
- Logistics (e.g. practice layout/building work; location of practice etc)

Key message. Need to increase awareness of barriers and highlight options available to overcome them.

A number of additional actions have been made over and above those initially pledged. These included:

- Reducing resource use (water, energy, new clothes)
- Changing travel (reduction in non EV car use)
- Changing diet
- Recycling/waste

Key message. Don't stop at one pledge but encourage using the momentum to find another!

Overall, all felt they had reduced their carbon footprint, and the majority (75%) by about as much as they had pledged.

Experience of the training

All recommended Carbon Literacy for Healthcare training, with comments on enjoyability, being informative, interesting and thought provoking with good facilitation of training.

Key message. To provide more case studies and off the peg projects to take into GP practices.

Survey for Non-Certified individuals

Survey response rate 4/54 (7%) for those who attended the training and workshop but did not complete the required pledge form. They were not assessed as Carbon Literate.

1 did training in 2023, 1 in 2022. 2 dates unknown

3 funded by another person/institution. 1 unknown

Overall knowledge increased from 2.5/5 prior to training average to 4/5 post training.

Reasons for non completion of paperwork/pledge form

There were several reasons why they didn't pledge. For one, they felt the form was too complex, another didn't understand requirements for completing the form and another felt a lack of engagement of staff hindered form completion specifically for the group pledge.

There were a couple of ways to make pledging more likely. Firstly, filling in the form during training/ as it went along, and secondly, greater clarity with their course funder who told the participant the practice needed to have completed the pledge rather than the individual.

Overall, 3 out of 4 felt they reduced their Carbon Footprint anyway, even without completing the formal certification process. Comments on the course were 'helpful', 'good' and 'helped them see opportunities for change'.

Key messages. Ensure appropriate communication of the requirements for certification prior to the course and workshop. Allowing sufficient protected time for pledge form completion. However, the majority of participants lowered their carbon footprint as a result of the course even without formal CL certification.

Conclusion

Overall, Carbon Literacy for Healthcare is a popular and well received course. The majority of people who start the training, complete it and successfully become certified as Carbon Literate by the Carbon Literacy Project. They all felt they had been successful in reducing their carbon footprint.

The barriers to implementing more actions are mainly time and staff engagement.

Unsurprisingly, small numbers who didn't complete the course responded to the survey (7%). Their knowledge increase and they reduced their carbon footprint despite not becoming formally certified.

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Testimonial from a successful participant

I really enjoyed the course and found it was at just the right level for me. The videos were well-researched, interesting and relevant to medical practice. The online workshop brought it all together nicely and, being interactive, was a great opportunity to ask questions. I learned a lot and enjoyed the journey!

Since I completed my pledge, I have taken part in my first online meeting with other Green Champions from the Trust and I have been added to the member list, which is a good start. I am also waiting to see if I have been accepted on a university's business sustainability course. From this point of view, I have found that your course really helped with my carbon literacy both within and outside of healthcare.

Personally, I have managed to reduce the amount of meat our household eats, have ensured that I shop local and avoid packaged foods where possible and we continue to reduce, repurpose and recycle. I don't think I have much of an issue with travel, but, when reading my bike magazines, I have found myself more interested in the articles on electric motorbikes.

Following on from the workshop, we have looked further into our energy suppliers, both at home and in the business warehouse and buildings. It appears that some apparently "100% green" suppliers are not and we have come to the conclusion that a few of the smaller suppliers are better than the bigger suppliers.