

# Banking and General Practice

## Background

It is well recognised that the climate and ecological crisis is affecting the health of people and populations – and general practice is on the front line to manage the impacts and rising patient demand.

Health professionals decided a long time ago that it is no longer ethically viable to financially associate with the tobacco industry while it continues to drive lung disease and premature death. We are now starting to understand how the fossil fuel industry is also putting at risk the health of millions of people.

UK banks are compounding the climate crisis by funnelling billions of pounds into climate-damaging projects. In 2022 alone, the five big UK high street banks (Barclays, HSBC, Santander, Lloyds, and NatWest) provided £29 billions of financial support to fossil fuel companies.

## GP Practice Banking Survey

To understand the opinions and attitudes of GP practice about their banking, SEE Sustainability produced an online survey. It was sent out to subscribers of the Greener Practice newsletter. The total number of responses was 15.

### Findings

Most practices bank with Lloyds, with a few at HSBC and NatWest.

Most current and savings accounts contain £100-250k with borrowing, on average, over £250k.

***The majority of GP practices are interested in changing accounts to a bank with a better environmental profile.***

However, resistance to change has been encountered.

For some, the fear of a complex, expensive or difficult process ‘fills me with dread’, involves ‘too much effort’, or ‘cost[s] too much’ (63%).

Others did not see the need for bank account switching – they ‘are happy with [their] current bank’, have ‘no reason to change’ and ‘there are features of [their] current bank

accounts [they] wouldn't want to lose' leading to inertia (63%).

In one case, attempts have been made but 'there is resistance from one or two senior team members' (7%).

For a significant percentage, it is, perhaps understandably 'not a practice priority' (33%).

For the average UK business, their carbon footprint doubles depending on where their money is kept.

[MotherTree](#) works with businesses of all kinds to help them clean up their finances. They research the banking needs for your practice and then carry out the bank account switch for you. For an average UK business, MotherTree saves c.£10k per year and reduces their carbon emissions by 70t CO<sub>2</sub>e - often their biggest reduction.

## FAQ/Q&A

### Q. How can I calculate the impact of the money help and used by the practice?

A. This link is used to calculate the money carbon footprint:

<https://form.typeform.com/to/jUoHhYWA>

### Q. A problem is the time taken in and opening a bank account with the partnership. We've got a number of business partners and getting all the partners signing up to even just opening a savings account with our current bank is hard. Is that something that you can help with?

A. It is a fuff for the people in the organisation. We absolutely do support on that. And we are consistently with organisations where there's multiple people required to firstly just make a decision on the bank and then secondly, to get the bank switched. They are actually the two hardest hurdles to overcome. And so, we've set the service up to make sure that we can. We ask the organisation those questions before any switch happened because understandably there's fear about what's going to happen with the money. And then once this decision's been made, we're also on hand to make sure it goes as smoothly as possible.

One of our clients, who put £30 billion through their accounts, have happily left Barclays, which has been a huge impact. That was an absolute colossal job trying to get all of the leadership team on board and then sign all the paperwork. So, we have experience there, it does take a long time if you're the person having to do all of all of it.

**Q. We've got sort of a large number of staff on payroll and it's the thought of transferring them across to a new bank that is stressful. What can be done to help?**

A. It depends on how each business is set up. We work with you and the bank to make sure it goes smoothly because that's the sort of risk that absolutely cannot become an issue. Employees have to be paid on time. So, we really are on that with our banks to make sure that that's all set up in due time so that it just doesn't become an issue.

**Q. In the talk, you mentioned that for one business you helped them make £30,000. How did you do that?**

A. The £30,000, that was from the banking alone and not from any investments. It was from how the banking setup. The organisation had all of their cash in a current account and it was a couple of £1,000,000. There's not an insignificant amount of money. What they weren't doing was optimising where that money was being held. So what we worked through with them was basically just good money practise, which was having a three to six months available in the current account in terms of their outgoing payments and having the rest locked away in a series of different accounts. This sounds complex. It was. It was easy to make happen once we know one of those accounts was easy access. So if at any point in the organisation needed extra access to the cash they could get it, but it was getting a better interest rate and then some of those other accounts and then locked away for longer time because the organisation knew they weren't going to need access to it for six months, for nine months, etcetera. And so we were able to then unlock it through interest rate. So that's the that's where that £30,000 come.

**Q. In my personal life, I've sort of invested in ethical funds and I'm always surprised that they don't perform as well as you expect them to. What are the financial benefits of investing in more ethical funds? Because that's something to feedback and try and sort of change the behaviour of the surgery.**

A. In terms of fund performance, it really depends on the type of funds that you're invested in and also the fees that you're having to pay to them be in that fund. Because if you're with an independent financial adviser and they're charging you 2% every year, often the gains that we get are then wiped out by those fees. What we see from an independent perspective and when we've done the research is that green funds are outperforming an oil and gas are actually a drag on the market. But it's complex if you're paying fees to a platform or to an individual and what kind of fund that you are in specifically.

### Q Does impact depend on size of practice?

A. Yes, bigger practises have a bigger impact. A practice with about one and a half million-pound annual turnover means over £100,000 passing through the current account every month. The impact if banking with Barclays of 2 1/2 tonnes for every £10,000, equates to 25 tonnes each and every month.

### Q. Who can support practice in moving bank accounts?

A. MotherTree simplifies the process, makes it (at worst) cost neutral and takes the fear away from practices.

The benefit of changing banks is features, options, and service are often similar or the same BUT with a more ethical and environmental smile. The interest rates are often higher – meaning the practice could earn more on their bank balance.

MotherTree's services can support GP surgeries with their concerns around bank account switching:

- Addressing any borrowing e.g. transfer of practice loan
- Demonstrating any financial incentives when switching banks
- Making the change process as quick, easy and hassle-free as possible
- Finding the best interest rates with the 'greener banks'
- Finding banks with similar T&Cs to current ones
- Gives time for the practice management team to consider the options.

### Q. What about helping our staff?

A. Consider a bank-switching workshop for your staff. Within a lifetime, the average person in the UK earns £1.5 million. If all surgery staff moved to ethical bank accounts today, that's millions and millions of pounds removed from fossil banks and instead invested in projects which actively protect health, such as sustainable housing and food projects.

Find out more about [Bank Switching Workshops](#) or [book a Bank Switching Workshop for your staff](#) co-hosted by Switch It Green and Bank Better.

Tipping Point - <https://tippingpointuk.org/>

MotherTree - <https://www.mymothertree.com/>

Switch It Green - <https://www.switchit.green/>

### Q. Why are you called My MotherTree?

A. It's inspired by work done by a Canadian scientist called Susan Simard, who she wrote the book called Finding the Mother Tree, which just completely blew my mind. So she discovered that old growth forests share the trees and old growth forest share nutrients through the mycelium, which is kind of like the rest of the mushroom and, and, and they communicate and it, it just completely blew my mind. And, and the

trees that share the most that connect the forest, the most of the mother trees. And that's what the business is all about is connecting and sharing, but also creating an ecosystem of sustainability minded people and businesses.

### Q. Have you done any podcasts we can share with our colleagues and PMs?

A. A few podcasts you might enjoy:

<https://podcasts.apple.com/gb/podcast/your-money-and-its-carbon-footprint-with-dan/id581790263?i=1000595102607>

<https://www.asustainablelife.co.uk/169-how-green-is-your-money-with-dan-sherrard-smith-from-mothertree/>

### Q. Is changing banks costly for a practice?

A. MotherTree charges by month using a pay grade, depending on the size of the organisation. Charges for GP surgeries are relatively low. MotherTree can help you unlock higher savings rates, save you research and administrative time, and make it quick and painless for your GP surgery to move bank accounts. An extra 1% interest for each £100,000 in a bank account is an extra £1,000 per year for the practice The price range starts from £80/month. MotherTree also offers group discounts, e.g. if a group of GP surgeries were to decide together that they want to make use of MotherTree services. [Book a free call](#) to learn more.

### Q. Who are MyMotherTree and what do they stand for?

A. MotherTree provides financial advisory services to organisations that want to maximise the positive impact of their money, be it via investments, bank accounts, insurance, or pension funds.

Our mission at MotherTree is to make it effortless for values-led businesses and individuals to save money and reduce carbon on their pensions, banks and bills. We believe that if enough of us take responsibility for where our money is invested we can change the system, to create a more positive, healthier planet for all.

#### **Q. What can MyMotherTree do for our practice?**

A. For organisations that want to move to an ethical banking provider, MotherTree can:

Provide a free introductory call to understand the organisation's existing situation and see if MotherTree can support them

- Measure where the organisation currently is at with its banking when it comes to financial performance, carbon emissions and values alignment.
- Research the organisation's banking needs and how they could best be met
- Perform and support bank switches for them (app 5 working days)
- Provide an ongoing report to identify providers that fit the organisation's needs, save them money, reduce carbon and align with their values
- Provide long-term follow-up services, notifying the organisation if a (financially or ethically) better banking option becomes available.

Website: <https://mymothertree.com/>