

# Reducing our impact in general practice - what can we do?



Dr Matt Sawyer



# Introduction

Dr Matt Sawyer

A GP in the North East England

## Interests

- Improving patient outcomes
- Environmental sustainability
- Carbon literacy
- Carbon footprints

BSc - Environmental Science

MSc - Corporate Sustainability and  
Environmental Management





# Today

- Why UK doctors have it easier
- Healthcare will be on the front line (again)
- Hotspots in primary care
- Working on solutions
- What's (y)our plan?

**\*\*UK perspective and data\*\***

# Why the UK doctors have it easier...

We have resources nationally

- Climate Change Act (2008 - amended 2019) – legally binding net zero targets by 2050
- Delivering a Net Zero Health Service - [www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs](http://www.england.nhs.uk/greenernhs)
- [www.lancetcountdown.org/2019-report](http://www.lancetcountdown.org/2019-report)
- [www.bmj.com/campaign/climate-change](http://www.bmj.com/campaign/climate-change)
- [www.ukhealthalliance.org](http://www.ukhealthalliance.org)

RCGP and the Climate Emergency

[www.rcgp.org.uk/policy/rcgp-policy-areas/climate-change-sustainable-development-and-health.aspx](http://www.rcgp.org.uk/policy/rcgp-policy-areas/climate-change-sustainable-development-and-health.aspx)

Hospitals declaring climate emergency

Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

GP led and developed resources

[www.greenimpact.org.uk/GlforHealth](http://www.greenimpact.org.uk/GlforHealth) - Green Impact for Health

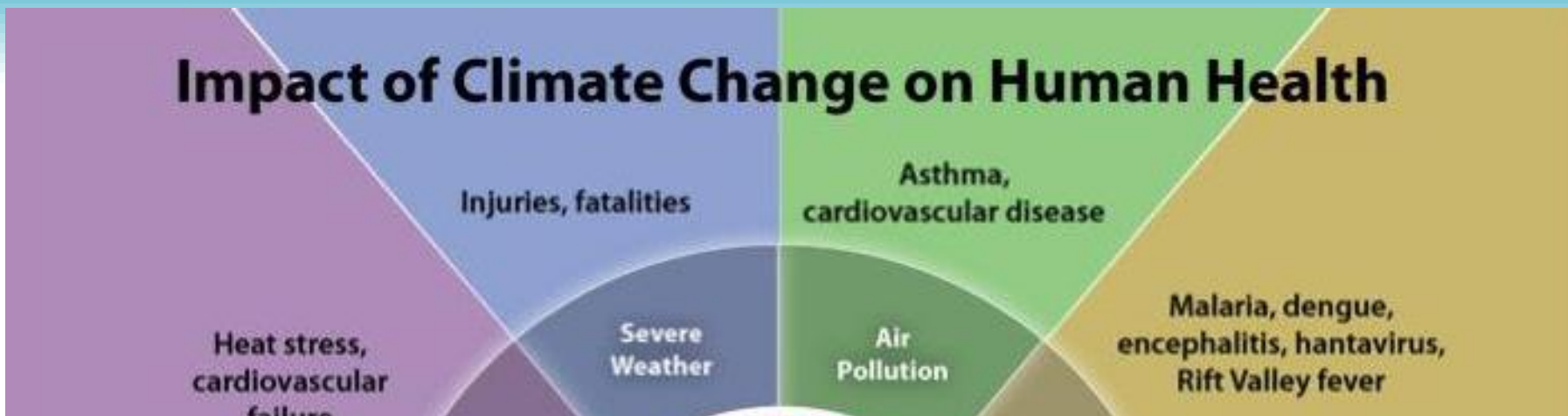
[www.greenerpractice.co.uk](http://www.greenerpractice.co.uk) – “Engaging General Practice in actions for the health of patients and planet”

[greeninhaler.org](http://greeninhaler.org) “Making your inhaler more environmentally friendly”

[sustainablehealthcare.org.uk](http://sustainablehealthcare.org.uk) - Centre for Sustainable Healthcare



## Impact of Climate Change on Human Health



**Healthcare will be the front line  
(again)**



# What aspects of general practice have the greatest impact on our climate?

## What can be done by practices to reduce their impact?



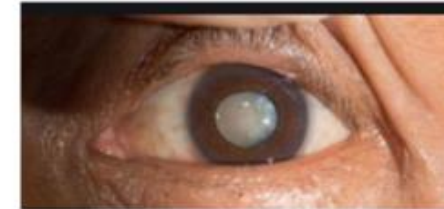
Flu vaccine



One month of  
omeprazole



Ventolin Evohaler



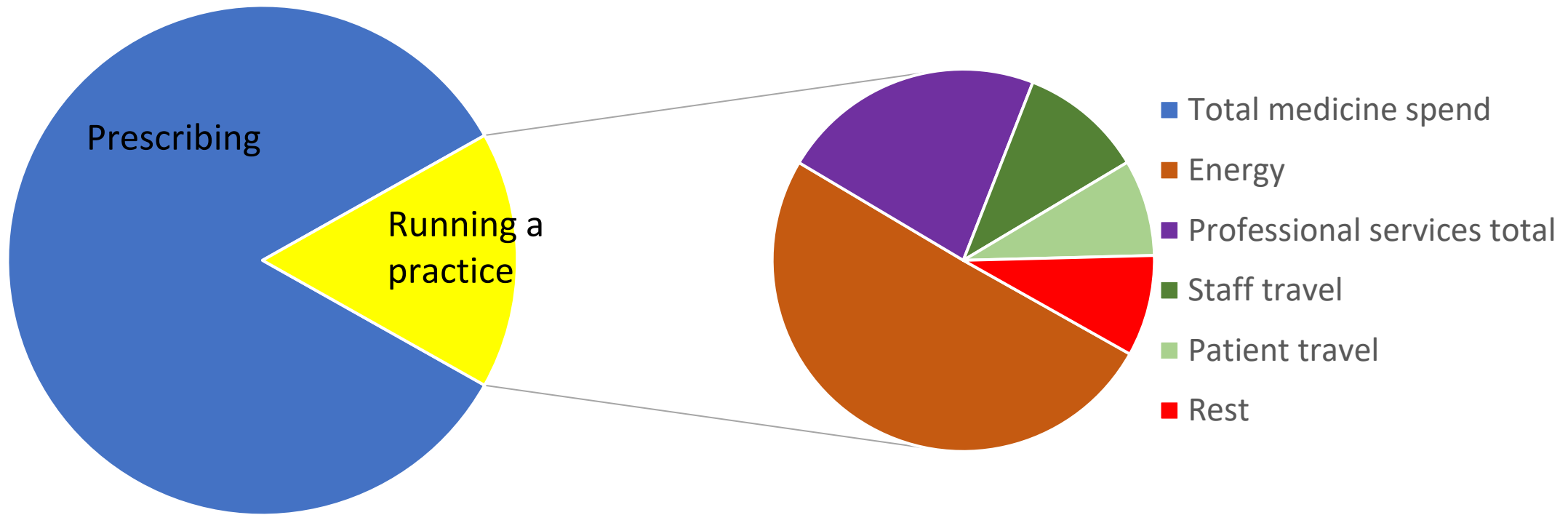
Cataract operation



GP appointment

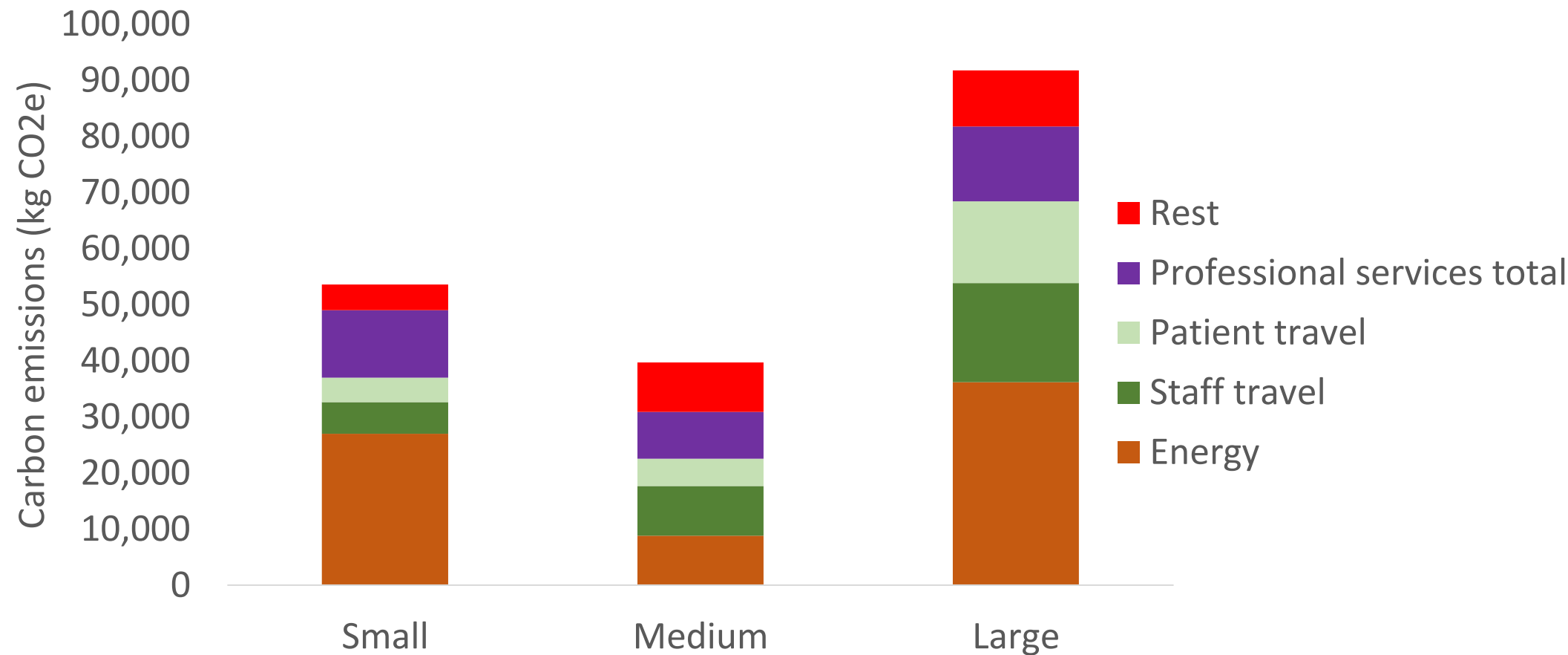
# Primary care - greatest impacts

Carbon emissions by area for small practices



# Our greatest impacts

Carbon emissions by size of practice

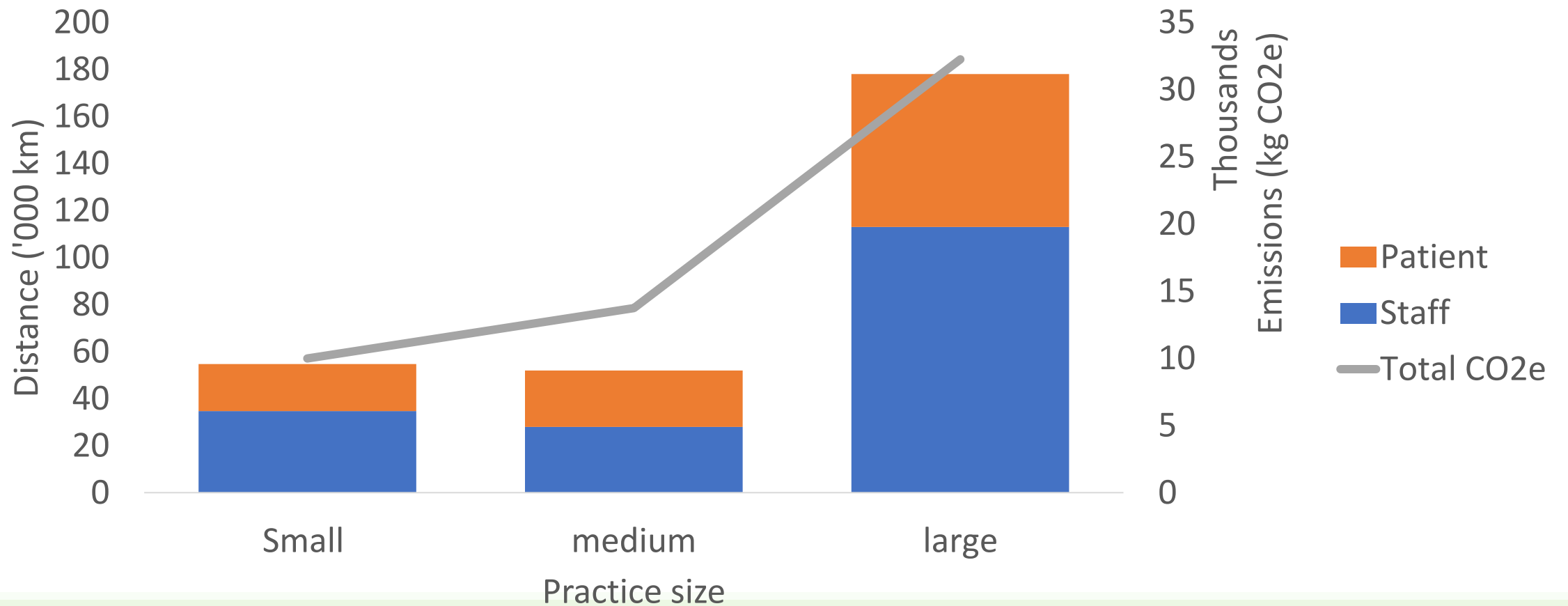






# Travel

Annual cumulative distance travelled  
by staff and patients



## Why is it important?

Electric Car

Petrol Car

Diesel Car

30,000 miles = 75 days of life lost

30,000 miles = 250 days of life lost

Urban  
congested

30 seconds

3 minutes 30 seconds

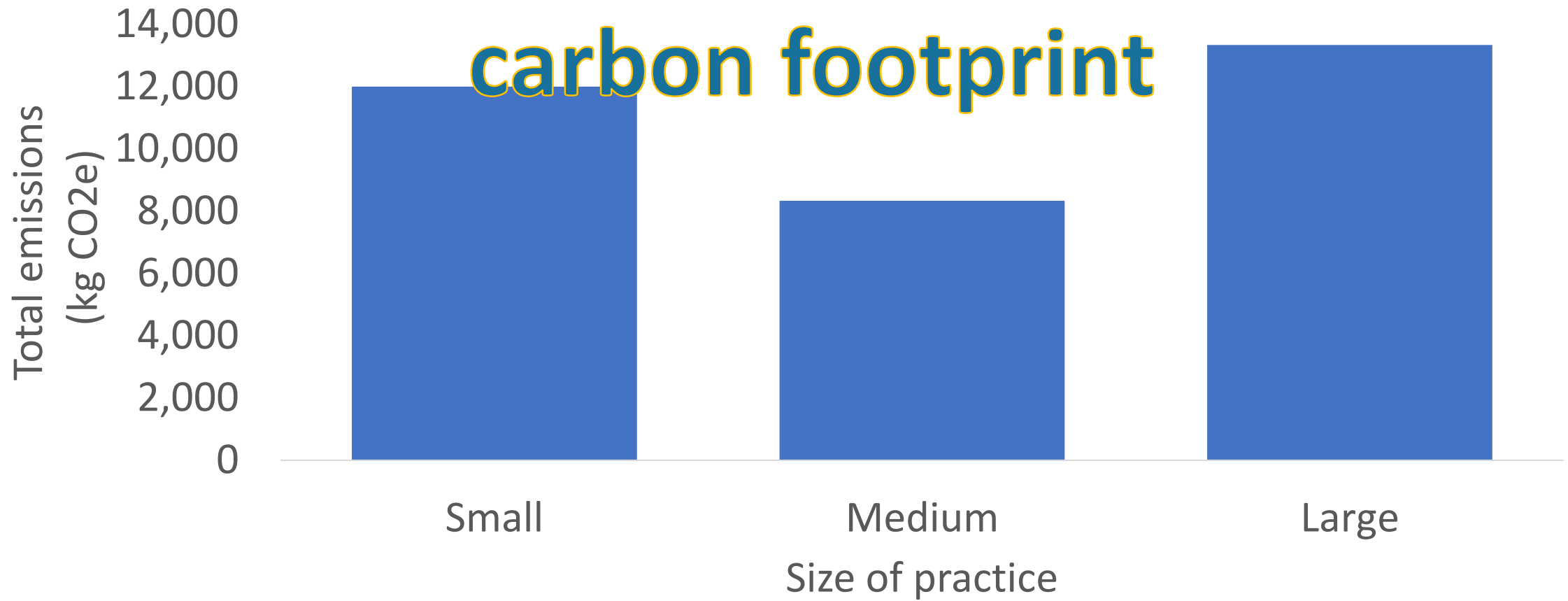
12 minutes



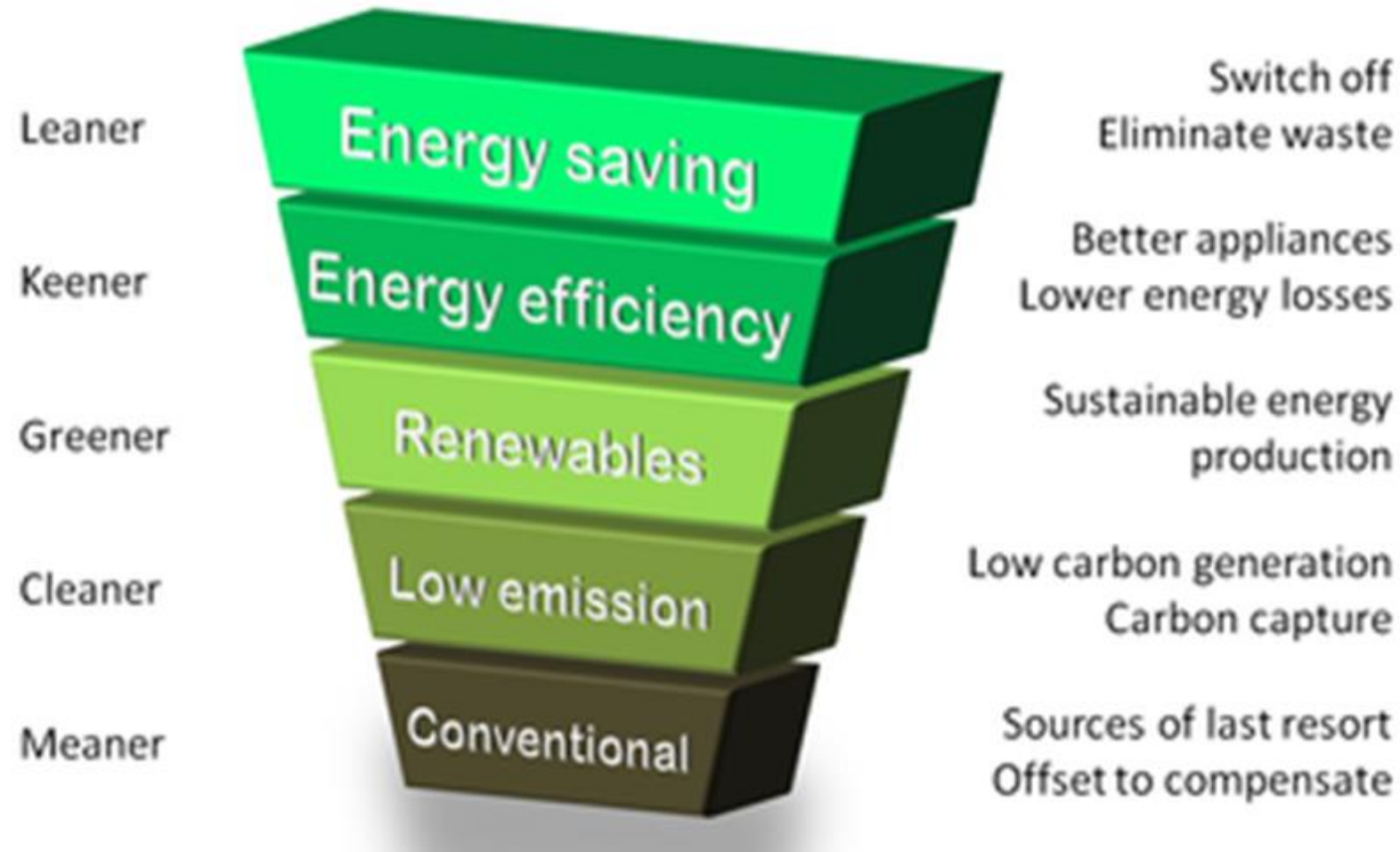


Professional services

# Your carbon footprint affects my carbon footprint

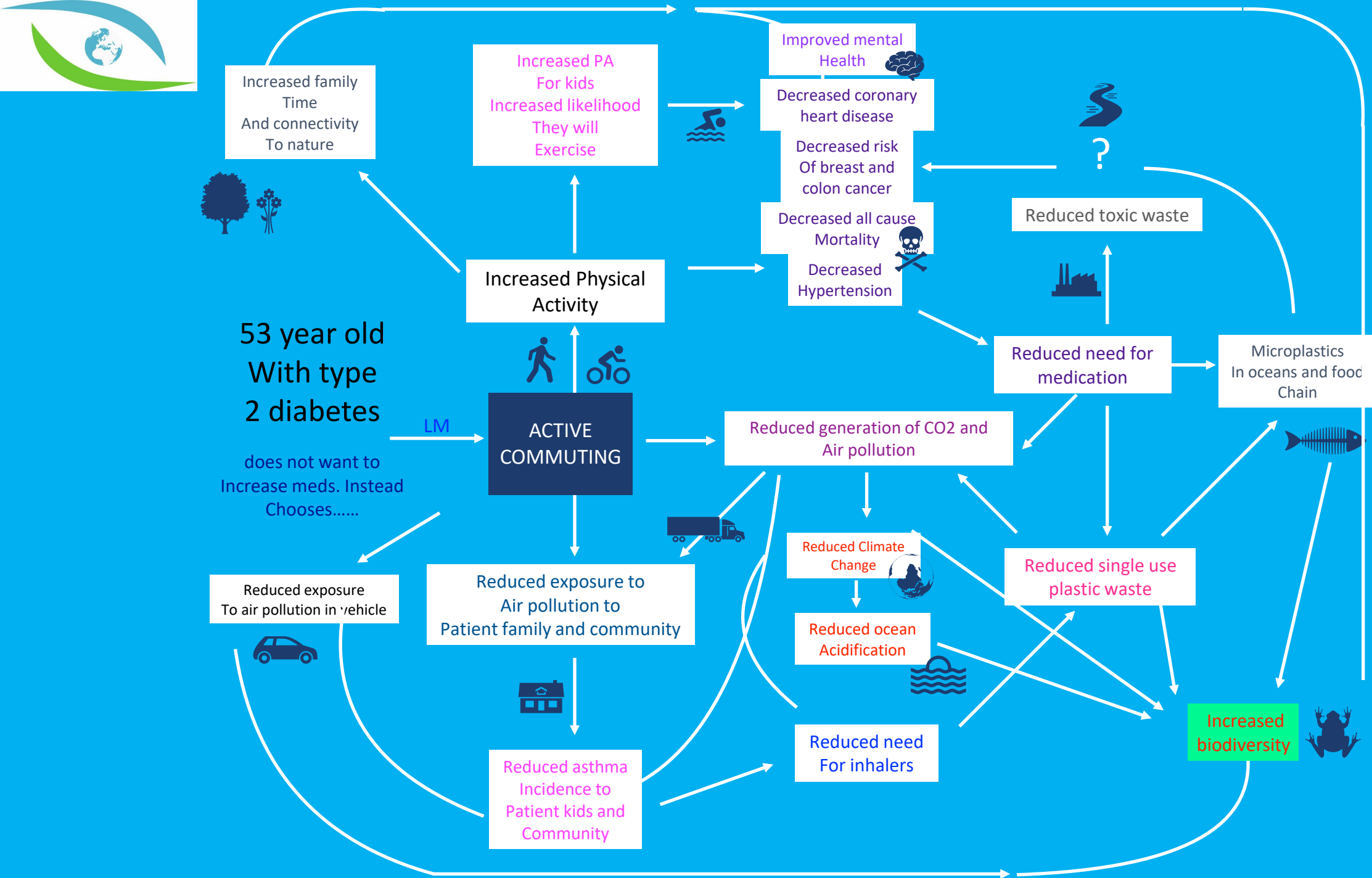


# Energy





What is our plan?



# Answers



Activity	Kg CO2 e per activity	Number per year (UK)
Cataract operation	182 kg	330,000
GP appointment	66 kg	300 million
Ventolin inhaler	25 kg	21.7 million prescriptions for salbutamol
Flu vaccine	1.7 kg	7.26 million
Omeprazole (1 month)	0.45 kg	31.5 million prescriptions

Online carbon literacy training for primary care staff  
[seesustainability.co.uk/health-carbon-literacy](https://seesustainability.co.uk/health-carbon-literacy)



# What can we do?

We can do a lot

- Become carbon literate - e.g. online course (Carbon Literacy project or SEE)
  - [seesustainability.co.uk/health-carbon-literacy](https://seesustainability.co.uk/health-carbon-literacy)
- Pledge to reduce your personal footprint
- Pledge to reduce your operational work footprint
- Pledge to reduce the impact of your work actions

Eco-ethical health leadership



# How Many Gigatons of Carbon Dioxide...?

have we released  
to date?

1010 GtCO<sub>2</sub>

added  
1850-1999

more can we  
"safely" release\*?

500

added  
2000-2015

335

our  
'carbon  
budget'

are left to release?

710

in fossil fuel  
reserves  
of all energy  
companies

780

remaining  
company  
reserves that  
could be  
developed

1,265

other reserves  
(including state-owned)

what's in the ground: 2755

CURRENT ANNUAL  
FOSSIL FUEL EMISSIONS

36

gigatons

\* before 2050 and still have an 80% chance  
of staying below 2°C warming

Thank you

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