

HOME CARE PROVIDER SUSTAINABILITY STARTER GUIDE

**Practical steps to improve client safety,
reduce travel and energy costs, and prepare
for future CQC expectations**

BE YOUR
BEST
VERSION



Welcome

Practical sustainability for safer, healthier, more resilient home care

Home care is built on connection – visiting people where they live, supporting independence, and providing comfort, dignity and continuity. It's also a service shaped by movement, weather, and the everyday realities of working in people's homes. That makes sustainability in home care both unique and deeply important.

Climate change is already affecting the people you support. Heatwaves, cold snaps, storms, and rising energy costs all have direct impacts on clients' health and safety. Travel disruptions affect staff wellbeing and lone worker safety. And small offices, dispersed teams and tight schedules mean every practical improvement matters.

This guide is designed to help you navigate sustainability in a way that feels achievable and genuinely useful. It focuses on the things that make the biggest difference in home care: safer travel, efficient routes, digital tools, comfortable home environments, hydration and ventilation, greener procurement for small teams, and planning for extreme weather.

You don't need a big budget or a large team to make progress. Small, thoughtful actions, taken consistently, can improve client wellbeing, reduce risks, support staff, and strengthen your service's resilience.

This is your starting point. The steps you take from here will help create a safer, healthier and more sustainable service for everyone you support.



About the author

My name is Sophie, and I run Be Your Best Version, a sustainability consultancy supporting small and medium-sized organisations across the UK. I am a certified ISO 14001 auditor and the author of 'Sustainable Business: Uncover the Benefits of Embracing Environmental and Social Responsibility'. My work is rooted in clarity, compassion and practicality - helping people make meaningful progress without overwhelm, pressure or jargon.



I've spent years working for the NHS and then with care providers, community organisations and local businesses, and I've seen first-hand how sustainability can strengthen wellbeing, resilience and confidence. Home care sits at the heart of our communities. It's delivered in the places people know best, by teams who balance compassion, practicality and constant movement.

I created this guide to offer something simple, supportive and genuinely useful. A starting point. A way to understand what sustainability looks like in home care, and how small steps can build into lasting change. The ideas here are designed for real-world pressures – short visits, travel between calls, tight schedules – with actions that feel achievable rather than overwhelming.

My approach is always people-first. Sustainability in home care is not about perfection; it's about comfort, dignity, safety and long-term wellbeing. It's about supporting people to live well at home, while helping staff feel equipped, valued and proud of the care they provide.

If this guide helps you take even one small, manageable step forward, then it has done its job.

Sophie



in/SophieWragg



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What Home Care providers need to know

Environmental sustainability sits within the Well-Led domain of the CQC's single assessment framework. While the CQC currently applies this quality statement formally only in NHS trusts, they have confirmed that they are developing how it will be assessed in other service types, including home care.

The following information summarises the expectations in a way that fits the realities of home care.

Understanding the impact of your service

The CQC expects leaders and staff to understand:

- how your activities affect the environment (especially travel, procurement and waste)
- how climate change affects the people you support (heatwaves, cold homes, storms, air quality)
- why sustainability is linked to safe, preventative, high-quality care

This includes recognising that climate risks disproportionately affect older people and those with long-term conditions.

Reducing your environmental impact

Inspectors look for evidence that you are taking steps to:

- reduce travel emissions through efficient scheduling and route planning
- use digital tools to reduce paper and unnecessary journeys
- choose lower-impact products and suppliers
- manage waste responsibly in both client homes and your office
- consider energy efficiency in any premises you use

Inspectors may ask about renewable energy, sustainable transport, and environmentally friendly waste management.

Supporting staff and clients to contribute

The CQC emphasises empowerment and shared understanding. This includes:

- raising awareness among staff through training, induction and communication
- supporting clients to make sustainable choices where appropriate
- involving people in conversations about comfort, hydration, ventilation and safe temperatures
- valuing clients' own knowledge and lived experience of low-waste, low-energy living (as highlighted by former CQC inspectors)

Inspectors may ask staff directly about environmental issues and what the service is doing.



What Home Care providers need to know

Adapting to climate risks

The CQC expects providers to prepare for climate-related risks that affect safety and continuity of care, including:

- heatwaves and overheating in client homes
- cold homes, fuel poverty and winter risks
- storms, flooding and travel disruption
- power cuts affecting medication storage, equipment or communication

Providers should be able to show how they protect people from the impacts of climate change through adaptation and mitigation plans.

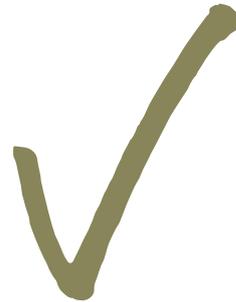
Embedding sustainability into governance

Environmental sustainability links directly to Regulation 17: Good Governance.

Inspectors look for:

- clear leadership responsibility
- policies and procedures that reflect environmental considerations
- evidence of reviewing progress
- simple monitoring (e.g., mileage, waste, energy use in the office)
- decision-making that considers environmental impact (especially procurement)

The CQC emphasises that low-carbon care is resource-efficient and supports care being delivered in the right place at the right time.



What “good” looks like for home care

A home care service that aligns with the CQC’s sustainability expectations will be able to show that it:

- understands its environmental impact, especially travel
- takes practical steps to reduce emissions and waste
- supports staff and clients to stay safe during extreme weather
- uses digital tools to reduce paper and unnecessary journeys
- considers environmental impact in procurement
- reviews and improves its approach over time
- embeds sustainability into everyday practice, not as an add-on

This strengthens client safety, staff wellbeing and the long-term resilience of the service.



Building a shared, practical approach to sustainability

Sustainability works best when it becomes part of everyday culture rather than a separate project. Home care thrives when staff feel involved, clients feel heard, and leadership sets a clear, steady direction. This page helps you create a simple structure that supports meaningful, achievable progress.

Your Green Vision

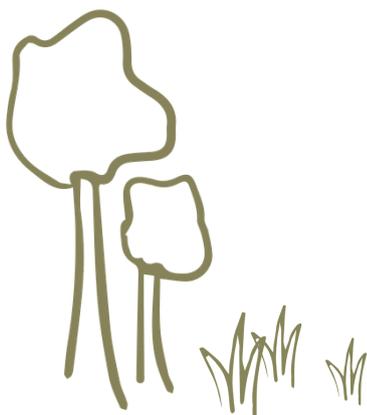
A Green Vision is a short, clear statement that explains:

- what sustainability means for your service
- why it matters
- how you intend to approach it

It doesn't need to be perfect, it just needs to be honest and practical.

Example: "We want to deliver safe, dignified care in people's homes while using resources wisely, reducing unnecessary travel, and supporting healthier, more resilient communities"

Write your Green Vision here.



Did you know....

For change to be effective you need around 25% of people on board - the best way to do this is to align your green vision with your company values

Building a shared, practical approach to sustainability

To put your Green Vision into practice you will need a Green Lead who is supported by a Green Team. Being part of a Green Team or having access to its members is a great way to ensure staff feel involved, residents feel heard, which in turn will help you push ideas forwards and achieve meaningful progress towards your goals. This page helps you create an effective Green Team.

Appointing a Green Lead

Choose someone who:

- is enthusiastic
- communicates well
- understands daily routines
- can coordinate small actions

This doesn't have to be a manager. A carer, domestic team member, or kitchen lead can be just as effective.

The Green Lead's role is to:

- keep sustainability on the agenda
- gather ideas from staff
- support small improvements
- help track progress

Creating a Green Team

A small, mixed group works best. Aim for representation from:

- care staff
- domestic/cleaning
- kitchen/catering
- maintenance
- activities
- a resident or family member (optional but powerful)
- management

Meet monthly or quarterly to:

- review progress
- share ideas
- plan small actions
- celebrate wins

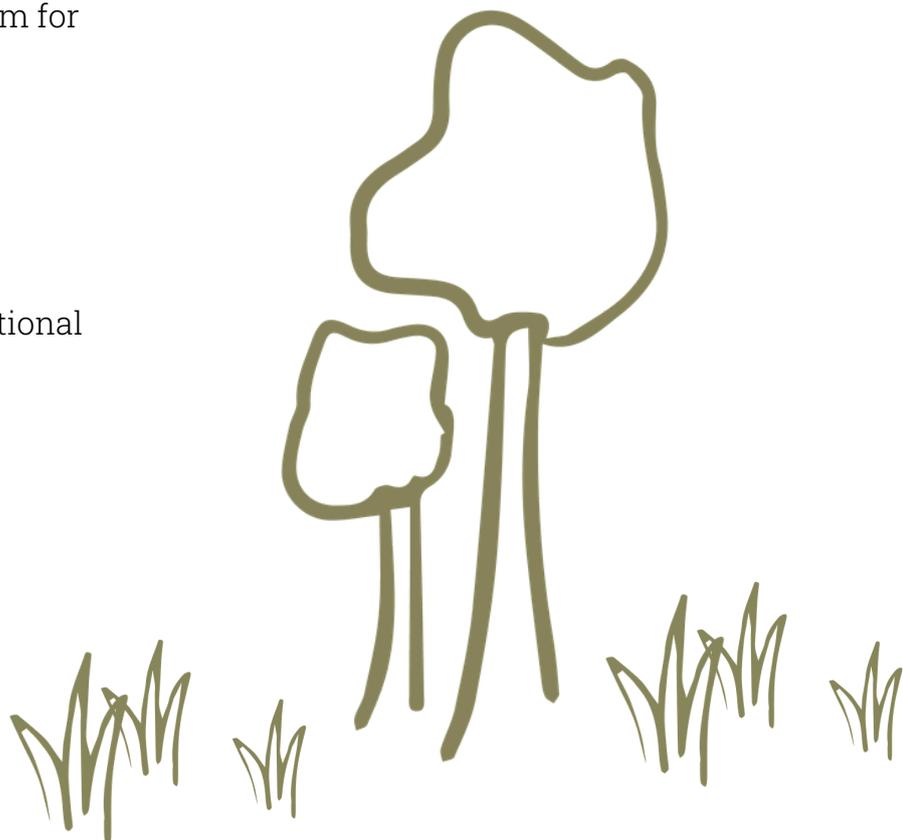
Staff Awareness & Engagement

Sustainability becomes easier when everyone understands the "why" behind it.

Simple ways to build awareness:

- short toolbox talks
- posters in staff areas
- themed weeks (e.g., "Energy Awareness Week")
- adding sustainability to induction
- celebrating small successes

When staff feel part of the journey, change becomes natural rather than forced.



Reducing mileage, improving safety and supporting staff wellbeing

Travel is one of the biggest environmental impacts in home care – and one of the biggest pressures on staff. Efficient routes don't just reduce emissions; they save time, lower stress, improve continuity of care and support safer lone working. Small improvements in planning and communication can make a meaningful difference to your team and the people you support.

Planning Smarter Routes

Efficient route planning helps reduce unnecessary mileage, avoid backtracking and make better use of staff time. It also supports safer travel during busy periods or extreme weather.

- Group visits by geography to minimise travel between clients.
- Use digital rostering tools to map routes and reduce duplication.
- Avoid scheduling long gaps between visits that require staff to return to base.
- Consider traffic patterns, school runs and known congestion points.
- Build in realistic travel times so staff don't feel rushed or unsafe.
- Review routes regularly – especially when new clients join or packages change.

Efficient routes support staff wellbeing and reduce the environmental footprint of your service.



Reducing Travel Emissions

Mileage is often the largest contributor to a home care provider's carbon footprint. Reducing unnecessary journeys can be simple and cost-saving.

- Use phone or video check-ins where appropriate and safe.
- Combine visits where clients live close together.
- Encourage staff to start and finish from home when possible.
- Reduce paper processes that require trips to the office.
- Plan weekly equipment or PPE collections rather than ad-hoc visits.
- Consider car-sharing for training sessions or meetings.

Even small reductions in mileage add up across a team.



Reducing mileage, improving safety and supporting staff wellbeing

Lone Worker Safety on the Road

Safe travel is essential for staff wellbeing and continuity of care. Route planning should always consider lone worker risks.

- Avoid isolated or poorly lit routes where possible.
- Share expected arrival times and check-in points.
- Ensure staff have a reliable way to call for help.
- Provide guidance on safe parking and entering unfamiliar areas.
- Review routes during extreme weather to avoid unsafe roads.
- Encourage staff to report hazards or concerns so routes can be adjusted.

Safety and sustainability go hand in hand – safer routes are often more efficient routes.



Greener Travel Options

Not every provider can invest in electric vehicles or fleet changes, but there are still meaningful options.

- Encourage walking or cycling for short, local visits where safe.
- Support staff to use public transport if routes are reliable.
- Consider electric or hybrid pool cars for larger teams.
- Offer mileage incentives for lower-emission travel where feasible.
- Provide safe storage for bikes or e-bikes at the office.

Greener travel choices can reduce costs as well as emissions.



Quick Wins for Travel Efficiency

- Cluster visits by postcode or neighbourhood.
- Use digital tools to reduce unnecessary office trips.
- Review routes monthly to spot inefficiencies.
- Encourage staff to flag travel challenges early.
- Build in extra time during heatwaves, snow or storms.
- Keep a simple log of mileage trends to track improvements.

These small steps help create a safer, more efficient and more sustainable service.



Supporting safe, comfortable and healthy homes during everyday care

Every client's home is different – in layout, temperature, ventilation, and the way they manage daily routines. Sustainability in home care includes helping people stay safe and comfortable in their own environment, especially as climate change increases the risks from heatwaves, cold snaps, storms and poor air quality. Small, thoughtful actions during visits can make a meaningful difference to wellbeing, safety and independence.



Safe Temperatures in the Home

Older people and those with long-term conditions are more vulnerable to temperature extremes. Staff play a key role in spotting risks early.

- Notice if rooms feel unusually hot or cold.
- Check whether heating or cooling equipment is working safely.
- Encourage simple adjustments such as closing blinds on hot days or using blankets in cold weather.
- Be alert to signs of heat stress, dehydration or cold-related illness.
- Record concerns and escalate promptly if a client may be at risk.

Supporting safe temperatures is a core part of preventative, person-centred care.

Hydration and Nutrition in Extreme Weather

Weather affects appetite, hydration and energy levels. Small prompts can help clients stay well.

- Offer drinks regularly, especially during heatwaves.
- Encourage foods with high water content when appropriate.
- Be mindful of reduced appetite in hot weather and increased needs in cold weather.
- Look for signs of dehydration or heat exhaustion.
- Support clients to access food safely during storms or power cuts.

Hydration and nutrition are simple but powerful ways to protect health.



Supporting safe, comfortable and healthy homes during everyday care



Ventilation and Air Quality

Good ventilation supports respiratory health, reduces indoor pollutants and helps manage heat.

- Encourage safe window opening where possible.
- Balance warmth with airflow in colder months.
- Be aware of clients with respiratory conditions who may need extra support.
- Notice damp, mould or poor air quality and report concerns.
- Support clients to use extractor fans or trickle vents if available.

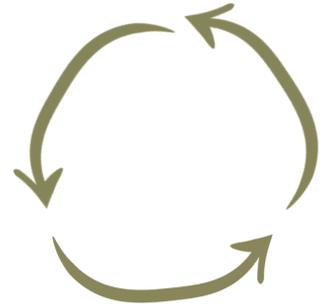
Small changes in airflow can make homes healthier and more comfortable.

Waste and Recycling in Client Homes

Waste management varies widely between households. Staff can support clients to manage waste safely and sustainably.

- Help clients follow local recycling systems where appropriate.
- Reduce single-use items where safe and practical.
- Ensure waste is stored securely to avoid hazards.
- Be mindful of infection control requirements.
- Report concerns if waste is building up or creating risks.

Supporting clients with waste is part of maintaining a safe, dignified home environment.



Quick Wins for Client Home Environments

- Open blinds in the morning and close them during hot afternoons.
- Encourage a glass of water at each visit.
- Check for safe, comfortable room temperatures.
- Support simple ventilation where appropriate.
- Notice and report any environmental risks early.

These small actions help clients stay safe, comfortable and well – especially as weather patterns become more unpredictable.

Keeping clients safe and supporting staff during heatwaves, cold snaps, storms and disruption

Climate change is already shaping the day-to-day reality of home care. Heatwaves, freezing temperatures, storms, flooding and power cuts all affect how safely staff can travel and how well clients can stay warm, cool, hydrated and connected. Building resilience isn't about predicting every scenario – it's about having simple, practical plans that protect people and keep your service running smoothly.

Heatwaves and High Temperatures

Older people and those with long-term conditions are at higher risk during hot weather. Staff play a vital role in spotting risks early and helping clients stay safe.

- Check room temperatures and notice signs of overheating.
- Encourage hydration at every visit.
- Close curtains or blinds during the hottest part of the day.
- Support clients to use fans safely or move to cooler rooms.
- Look for signs of heat exhaustion or dehydration.
- Adjust visit times where possible to avoid the hottest hours.
- Ensure staff have water, sun protection and shaded rest breaks.

Heatwaves are becoming more frequent – simple actions can prevent serious harm.

Cold Weather, Snow and Freezing Conditions

Cold homes increase the risk of hypothermia, falls, respiratory illness and worsening long-term conditions.

- Notice if the home feels unusually cold.
- Check whether heating is working and report concerns promptly.
- Encourage warm drinks and appropriate clothing or blankets.
- Be alert to signs of fuel poverty or clients rationing heating.
- Support safe ventilation without excessive heat loss.
- Adjust routes to avoid icy roads or unsafe travel conditions.
- Ensure staff have warm clothing and safe footwear.

Cold snaps can be sudden – early awareness helps keep clients safe.

Storms, Flooding and Severe Weather

Storms and flooding can disrupt travel, isolate clients and affect the safety of staff working alone.

- Check weather alerts and adjust routes accordingly.
- Avoid known flood zones or unsafe roads.
- Ensure staff have a clear communication plan if delayed.
- Prioritise visits to clients who are isolated or medically vulnerable.
- Record and escalate any concerns about property damage or safety.
- Prepare alternative travel routes in advance.

Clear communication and flexible planning help maintain continuity of care.

Keeping clients safe and supporting staff during heatwaves, cold snaps, storms and disruption

Power Cuts and Service Disruption

Power cuts can affect medication storage, equipment, heating, lighting and communication.

- Check whether clients rely on powered medical equipment.
- Ensure staff know how to report urgent risks.
- Support clients to keep essential items accessible (torches, blankets, medication).
- Be aware of food safety issues if fridges or freezers fail.
- Encourage clients to keep mobile phones charged where possible.
- Maintain clear communication channels between staff and the office.

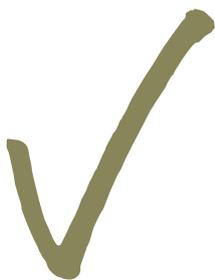
Even short power cuts can create risks for vulnerable clients.

Building a Resilient Service

Resilience is about planning ahead so your team can respond calmly and confidently.

- Keep an up-to-date list of clients who are most vulnerable during extreme weather.
- Review travel routes seasonally and identify risk areas.
- Ensure staff know how to escalate environmental concerns.
- Build weather alerts into daily planning.
- Review your continuity plan annually.
- Capture learning after each weather event to strengthen future responses.

Resilience grows through small, consistent improvements.



Quick Wins for Climate Resilience

- Encourage hydration and safe temperatures during every visit.
- Adjust routes and visit times during extreme weather.
- Keep a simple list of high-risk clients.
- Ensure staff have safe travel guidance and communication tools.
- Report environmental risks early and clearly.

These small steps help protect clients, support staff and keep your service running safely – whatever the weather brings.

Building awareness, confidence and shared responsibility across a dispersed team

Sustainability in home care is shaped by people – the staff who travel between visits, the clients who welcome you into their homes, and the families and communities you support. Because teams are often spread out and working alone, culture matters even more. A strong, shared approach helps everyone feel confident, connected and part of something meaningful.



Staff Awareness and Everyday Practice

Staff don't need to be experts in sustainability. They just need simple, clear guidance that fits naturally into their work.

- Include sustainability in induction and refresher training.
- Share short, practical prompts through team meetings, apps or handovers.
- Explain how climate risks affect clients (heatwaves, cold homes, storms).
- Encourage staff to notice and report environmental risks in client homes.
- Make sustainability part of everyday conversations, not an extra task.

When staff understand the “why”, the “how” becomes much easier.

Supporting Staff Wellbeing

A sustainable service supports the people delivering the care. Small changes can reduce stress and help staff feel valued.

- Plan routes that reduce unnecessary travel and rushing.
- Adjust schedules during extreme weather to protect lone workers.
- Provide clear guidance on safe travel, hydration and rest during heatwaves.
- Encourage staff to share challenges early so solutions can be found.
- Celebrate small improvements and ideas from the team.

Wellbeing and sustainability go hand in hand – both strengthen resilience.



Building awareness, confidence and shared responsibility across a dispersed team

Engaging Clients and Families

Clients and families often have deep knowledge of their homes, routines and needs. Involving them creates shared understanding and better outcomes.

- Talk about comfort, hydration, ventilation and safe temperatures.
- Encourage small, achievable changes that respect choice and independence.
- Share simple information about staying safe during extreme weather.
- Listen to clients' own ideas – many already live low-waste, low-energy lives.
- Keep families informed when environmental risks affect care.

Engagement is about partnership, not pressure.



Creating a Culture of Shared Responsibility

Culture grows through consistency, clarity and kindness. It's built in the small moments – the conversations, the reminders, the way challenges are handled.

- Make sustainability part of team identity: "This is how we care."
- Keep actions simple and achievable so staff feel confident.
- Use positive language that focuses on safety, comfort and wellbeing.
- Review progress together and celebrate what's working.
- Encourage curiosity and openness rather than perfection.

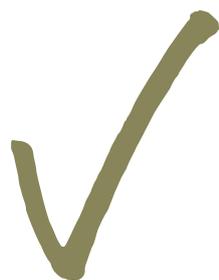
A strong culture helps sustainability become a natural part of care, not an add-on.



Quick Wins for Culture and Engagement

- Add one sustainability prompt to each team meeting.
- Share a monthly "green tip" through your communication app.
- Encourage staff to suggest improvements and recognise their ideas.
- Talk to clients about comfort and hydration during every visit.
- Keep sustainability visible in policies, training and daily practice.

These small steps help build a confident, connected and resilient team.



Simple actions that make an immediate difference

This page brings together small, achievable steps that home care can take straight away. Each action is designed to be low-cost, low-effort, and high-impact – helping you build momentum and confidence as you strengthen your sustainability approach.

Use this page as a working checklist. Tick what you already do, circle what you want to try next, and revisit it regularly to track progress.

Travel & Route Efficiency

- Cluster visits by postcode or neighbourhood
- Review routes weekly to reduce backtracking
- Encourage staff to start/finish from home where appropriate
- Reduce unnecessary office trips through digital communication
- Check staff have safe travel guidance for extreme weather

Client Home Environment

- Check room temperatures during every visit
- Encourage hydration, especially in warm weather
- Close blinds/curtains during peak heat if appropriate
- Support safe ventilation (windows, extractor fans, trickle vents)
- Notice and report damp, mould or poor air quality
- Support clients with waste and recycling where appropriate

Staff Engagement and Wellbeing

- Appoint a Green Lead or Champion
- Add sustainability to staff induction
- Share simple prompts through your communication app
- Encourage staff to report environmental risks in client homes
- Celebrate small wins and ideas from the team

Extreme Weather & Climate Resilience

- Keep a list of clients most at risk in extreme weather
- Prepare a simple heatwave plan for staff and clients
- Review cold homes and escalate concerns promptly
- Check travel routes for flood or storm risks
- Ensure staff have torches, chargers and weather-safe clothing
- Encourage clients to keep essential items accessible during power cuts

Office & Operations

- Switch office bulbs to LEDs
- Review heating settings and avoid overheating the space
- Turn off unused equipment at the socket
- Use natural light where possible
- Set up clear, labelled recycling points
- Reduce printing and use digital tools as default
- Choose refillable or concentrated cleaning products



Assess your current position

This tool helps you take a snapshot of how your service is currently doing across the key areas of sustainability in home care. It's not about scoring or perfection – it's about noticing strengths, spotting gaps, and choosing the areas that matter most for your clients, staff and service.

For each statement, tick the option that best reflects your current practice.

		Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Travel & Route Efficiency	We plan routes to minimise unnecessary mileage and backtracking.					
	We use digital rostering tools to support efficient scheduling.					
	Staff feel they have enough travel time between visits to stay safe.					
	We adjust routes during extreme weather to protect lone workers.					
Client Home Environment	Staff check for safe temperatures in client homes (too hot / too cold).					
	We support hydration and nutrition, especially during extreme weather.					
	We encourage safe ventilation and notice signs of poor air quality.					
	We support clients with waste and recycling where appropriate.					
Office & Operations	We use energy efficiently in our office (heating, lighting, equipment).					
	We reduce paper use through digital tools and processes.					
	We have simple recycling systems in place.					
	We make thoughtful, sustainable choices when buying supplies					

Continued overleaf

Assess your current position

		Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Extreme Weather & Climate Resilience	We have plans for heatwaves, cold snaps, storms and flooding.					
	Staff know how to escalate environmental risks in client homes.					
	We keep an up-to-date list of clients who are most vulnerable in extreme weather.					
	We review routes and visit priorities during severe weather.					
People, Culture & Engagement	Staff understand how climate risks affect the people we support.					
	We include sustainability in induction, training or team communication.					
	Clients and families are involved in conversations about comfort and safety.					
	Staff feel confident raising environmental concerns.					
Leadership, Governance & Improvement	We consider environmental impact in decision-making (e.g., procurement, travel).					
	We review sustainability actions or risks at least annually					
	We have clear leadership responsibility for sustainability.					
	We can evidence small improvements over time.					

What this assessment tells you

Mostly “Always/Often” - You have strong foundations. Focus on embedding and evidencing.

A mix of “Often/Sometimes” - You’re making progress. Choose 1–2 areas to strengthen next.

Mostly “Sometimes/Rarely/Never” - Start with small, achievable actions in the areas that matter most for client safety and staff wellbeing.

Turning small actions into lasting, confident progress

This guide gives you a strong foundation: practical ideas, simple checklists, and a clearer understanding of what environmental sustainability looks like in a home care service. The most important thing now is not to tackle everything at once, but to choose one or two areas that matter most for your clients and your team, and build from there. Sustainability in home care is a journey made up of small, steady improvements – each one supporting client safety, staff wellbeing, and the long-term resilience of your service.

Where You Can Go From Here

Many home care providers choose to build on this starter guide by:

- creating a simple sustainability action plan tailored to community visits
- developing a Green Plan aligned with emerging CQC expectations
- reviewing travel, digital tools, or procurement practices in more depth
- strengthening staff awareness around climate risks and client safety
- preparing evidence for inspections, tenders or local authority contracts
- measuring their carbon footprint to understand their impact

Whether you want a light-touch next step or a more structured approach, there are supportive, achievable ways forward.

How I Can Help

I work with home care providers across the UK to make sustainability clear, manageable, and genuinely useful. My support is always practical, people-centred, and shaped around the realities of community-based care – tight schedules, lone working, dispersed teams and varied client homes.

You can choose the level of support that feels right for your service, including:

- Sustainability Action Plans – turning your priorities into a clear, achievable roadmap.
- Green Plans for Home Care – a structured, CQC-aligned plan that brings everything together.
- Carbon Footprinting – simple, accurate measurement of your environmental impact.
- Travel, Digital and Procurement Reviews – identifying savings, efficiencies and quick wins.
- Staff Training & Engagement – building confidence and shared ownership across a dispersed team.
- Policy & Evidence Pack Support – preparing for inspections, tenders or commissioner reporting.

Everything is designed to reduce overwhelm, build confidence, and help you make meaningful progress at a pace that works for you.

You Don't Have to Do This Alone

If you'd like support with your next steps, whether that's a short conversation, a focused piece of work, or a full sustainability plan, I'd be happy to help.

Email: contact@beyourbestversion.co.uk

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*Helping care providers build healthier,
more resilient futures*



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