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Changing the way we work

An Every Action Counts guide to greening your office





Source: Jo Pearce

Foreword

Mark Walton,
Head of Every Action Counts Programme



Every Action Counts is an innovative programme aimed at supporting national and local voluntary and community sector organisations across England to protect and improve our environment and to deliver sustainable development. We aim to support 14,000 community groups to become more environmentally sustainable in order to tackle climate change and contribute to the sustainable development of their neighbourhoods.

All organisations, large or small, carry out some office work, whether it is from their own offices, a shared building or from home. These day to day activities all have some impact on the environment as a result of using energy for transport or electricity, paper and other office supplies or the refreshments we buy for meetings and events.

A recent survey carried out by Groundwork for Every Action Counts (www.everyactioncounts.org.uk/guides/greenoffice/survey.pdf) found that whilst many voluntary and community organisations were already taking some steps to make their office 'greener' 89% would like to make further improvements. This guide is aimed specifically at voluntary and community organisations and is supported by a series of web based fact sheets and work sheets to help you to:

Save energy - reduce your energy bills and have a positive impact on climate change at the same time.

Travel wisely - travel in ways which save fuel, help colleagues get to know each other and which reduce carbon dioxide emission from cars and mini-buses.

Shop ethically - use your shopping choices to buy local food which cuts transport pollution, supports local businesses and buy fairly traded goods to help producers overseas.

Save resources - by saving waste and water you can save money for your organisation as well as help protect the environment.

Care for your area - take an interest in your local environment, help protect local wildlife and have your say on local plans affecting your area.

We hope that this publication will help you to make your community organisation even stronger by minimising its impact on the environment and helping to further inspire and inform your community.

More ideas, information and resources are available on the Every Action Counts website – www.everyactioncounts.org.uk – so why not take a look, sign up and take action.

Introduction

Welcome to 'Changing the way we work'. This guide shows why and how your organisation should change how you work in ways that will benefit your environment and save you money. The guide is specifically for organisations working in the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and you'll find a range of examples showing how VCS groups are already making a difference.

VCS organisations vary enormously in shape and size and you may find that some of what's in this guide is not relevant to your office. The key is to use this as a starting point and to take these ideas and fit them in with what you are doing already.

This guide is just one part of the help and advice that Every Action Counts can offer. The final section of this guide includes a range of links and publications, and there is an Every Action Counts website at www.everyactioncounts.org.uk.

As you read through this book you will see some references to materials available to download from the website. You'll also see some 'key words' highlighted *like this*; if you search the EAC website using these words you will find more relevant information.

NAVCA is the national voice of Third Sector sector infrastructure in England. Our members work with 140,000 Third Sector groups which provide services, regenerate neighbourhoods, promote volunteering and tackle discrimination in partnership with local public bodies.

Groundwork supports communities in need, working with partners to help improve the quality of people's lives, their prospects and potential and the places where they live, work and play. Our vision is of a society of sustainable communities which are vibrant, healthy and safe, which respect the local and global environment and where individuals and enterprise prosper.



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Source: Groundwork UK

Getting started

Why should our organisation worry about the environment?

The state of our environment has concerned people for many years. But over the last decade it has become clear that humanity is starting to cause serious damage to the planet's ecosystems. If we do not act now, that damage will get worse and become hard to reverse. Taking action on environmental issues has become a common social responsibility for us all. If we want to minimise the problems we and our children will face then we need to make changes at every level. Actions on local environmental issues all play a part in tackling **global climate change**.

This poses three challenges for any voluntary organisation. How can we:

- link these issues to the core purpose and values of the organisation;
- make a real difference with limited resources; and
- engage staff, volunteers, trustees and people who work with the organisation?

Why worry about Climate Change?

There is now a strong consensus among the scientific community that the world is warming and that this is at least partly

the result of human activities. Global temperature rose by 0.7°C during the 20th century. All but one of the warmest 10 years on record has occurred since 1990 (all figures from UK government).

The climate in the UK is projected to change significantly by 2100, with average annual temperatures rising by up to 5°C over the next 100 years. The specific changes we are likely to see can be summarised as:

- Higher average temperatures, leading to a greater need for cooling in offices and homes (and therefore higher energy consumption) and a higher probability of extreme high temperatures threatening the health of vulnerable people.
- Wetter winters, leading to increased flood risk.
- Drier summers, with water shortages in many areas and damage to wildlife and crops.
- Rising sea levels, leading to more coastal erosion and a greater risk of flooding.

All this is likely to have the worst impacts on the poorest communities, especially those likely to be affected by flooding or in poor housing. The good news is that



Credit: Hazel Thompson Ethical Property Foundation 3

there is time to tackle these problems, and that this can be done in ways that can also benefit local communities.

Linking environmental issues with your organisations' core purposes may raise new issues but it makes good sense. The quality of the local environment affects how people feel about their neighbourhood. Research shows that all too often the poorest communities suffer the extra burden of having the worst environments. This may involve a lack of good quality green space, or poor access to public transport or shops selling fresh food, but it can also involve living close to busy roads, polluting factories or waste sites. In the worst cases these problems can have significant impacts on people's health – it is accepted that air pollution from traffic leads to over 32,000

early deaths every year (Source: EU/Clean Air for Europe). Community action can help resolve these environmental inequalities.

Changing what you do in your office may not have a major impact on these problems, but you can lead by example and show people there are things that any community can do to improve where they live.

Every Action Counts (EAC) is a programme set up specifically to help you deliver this local change through community organisations. It is funded by Defra, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. EAC can offer help and advice to any community group, and is offering free training to people in those groups who would like to become '**community champions**'.

Sustainable Development - making it work locally

The ultimate aim to Every Action Counts is to contribute to 'sustainable development'.

Sustainable Development is about integrating environmental, social and economic issues, and about the need for lasting and long-term change. The current UK sustainable development strategy states that: "*the goal of sustainable development is to enable all people throughout the world to satisfy their basic needs and enjoy a better quality of life - without compromising the quality of life for future generations ...*"

It adds that "*Creating sustainable communities everywhere is a challenging task. It requires us to integrate the delivery of social, economic and environmental goals, to take a co-ordinated approach to delivering public services that work for everyone, including the most disadvantaged, and to think strategically for the long-term*". (Securing the Future - the UK Government Sustainable Development Strategy 2005)

So what's all this to do with us?

Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) offices are only a small part of Britain's business world, but the VCS impacts on people's lives in many ways. Millions of people are involved every month with local voluntary activity, and those people work and talk with people they trust. The VCS can be a key way to get information across to people, and one way to do that is to lead by example.

You could certainly suggest that your office doesn't on its own have a huge impact on the world's climate and you'd be right. But together the UK's workplaces do have a significant impact, not just in terms of the energy they use, but also through the materials they buy and use, the travel people do, the waste they produce and much more.

Making changes is never easy. Yet change is what every workplace will need to do. The

Government is about to set national targets for reducing our polluting emissions and funders are also going to expect to see evidence of change.

You may be pleasantly surprised how far people are now ready for change. Throughout this guide you'll see examples of how VCS organisations are responding to this challenge. A recent EAC survey of the VCS showed that 89% of respondents wanted to make their offices greener. 77% said they needed more information to help them change things. This guide will help you get started. The changes you make will take time and effort but they will save energy and money and they will provide a strong message that your organisation is committed to a just and sustainable future.

The benefits of environmental policy and practice

There are both direct and indirect benefits for any organisation from improving your environment. The most obvious direct benefit is in saving money on energy and cutting waste, but improving the office environment can also create a healthier and more congenial place to work. The indirect benefits of taking action for your office and your community may be less obvious but can include improvements to local services and better support for local businesses.

Building expertise within your office may also help tackle issues of **environmental justice**. Poorer communities may not be engaged in consultations about new developments that may affect them, and may lack the time, resources and capacity to get involved in tackling these environmental issues.

As you improve your environmental performance you may also be better able to offer good advice to local communities on these issues or advise them on where to get help. The EAC website and training programmes can help build skills in this area.



Where do we fit in?

Just as national and global issues affect your neighbourhood, so the work that you can do also affects those bigger issues. At the core is your own work to improve your own performance. This in turn can link in to and influence action by those who use your services, and they and you will affect your wider local environment. Action at the local level across the UK has a national and ultimately a global impact.

How do we make changes?

If you're going to create a greener office environment there are a few key places to begin:

- Get staff and **Trustees** engaged right from the start.
- Work out what kind of changes you can make most easily to get the work started.
- Identify major obstacles – one may

be that you rent your office and can only make limited changes; another may be peoples' confusion and scepticism.

- Review your values and mission statement and see what links can be made.
- Look to develop a long-term plan with some straightforward initial actions and more serious longer-term goals.

It's hard for any one person to change how a work-place operates. If you're going to bring about real and lasting change then you need to get everyone involved. The best way to start is to draw together a small team. If it's a very small office it may just be two of you, but even just one other person can help develop ideas and make them work.

Start to **build your team** with a meeting for all staff. This can be a special event just

to talk about greening the office, or it can be part of a regular office meeting, but either way allow time for a real discussion. You will need to explain what this is about and why it's important. You should also look to get the support of your Trustees – perhaps one or two at first, but take these ideas to your Board at an early stage and look for someone on the Board to champion these ideas.

There are three messages to get across:

- Show people how this links with the purpose of your organisation. Action for sustainability should flow naturally from a typical VCS organisation's values.
- We have a shared responsibility to protect our environment and everyone can help make a difference.
- This can save the organisation money and increasingly funders are going to expect you to have an environmental 'action plan'.

Invite people to talk about how they think things could improve. Write down everyone's ideas and introduce the idea that the organisation should develop its own environmental or **sustainable development action plan**. Then invite people to join the **'green team'** (or whatever you want to call it). The team should include the key people – the office manager if there is one, and the person who orders the stationery etc. But it's also worth including the enthusiasts – for example the people who are already keen recyclers. – as they may be keen to put time in to make this work.

At the end of the discussion try and get some agreed commitments:

- Get everyone to recognise that the team is going to start work and that changes will follow;
- Identify two or three of the most



Source: Every Action Counts

obvious points, ideally where immediate action can be taken;

- Get agreement on the need for an action plan and the timetable for producing that plan.

Work to develop a **Sustainable Development Action Plan** will take some time and planning.

It may usefully have five sections, one for each of the key issues and for each of these it should include:

- things to be done **now**,
- things that can be done **soon** and
- matters to be done **later** that will need longer-term planning and resources.

Don't forget:

- **Plan for access and equality issues**
Involve everyone in the office, not just those with perceived 'expertise' – everyone may have good ideas. Make sure that any planned changes aren't going to have undue negative impacts on anyone. Be especially aware of anyone (staff, volunteers and users) with access, visual or mobility issues who may be affected and plan for this. Equally, if you are **upgrading your office** to improve access issues, this may be a good time to bring in environmental improvements.



Source: Groundwork UK

- **Keep people well informed**

The need for environmental action is widely accepted but there's always a few people who think 'someone else should do this'. Build up an office file of **information resources** that can help convince the sceptics and share knowledge and ideas within the team.

- **Keep it fun and interesting**

Find some activities that can involve everyone and maybe put some hours aside for a joint piece of work. This could be some environmental action or it could be a lunch-time 'eco-quiz' (with Fair Trade prizes). Be sure to show people why you are looking to do what is planned and make more detailed information available to those who would like it. Start a 'good ideas' suggestions box encouraging staff and volunteers to be creative and to share ideas and knowledge (e.g. about local outlets for **recycling** waste materials).

- **'Incentivising' behaviour**

Getting people to change their behaviour is central to making real changes. How far you offer individual incentives and rewards for positive action may depend on the working culture in your office. But when a clear step has been taken (e.g. energy use targets have been met or a paper recycling scheme has collected its first tonne of paper) then some joint celebration may well be in order.

Getting your landlord on side to make changes

- If you are a tenant, particularly in a shared building, services such as energy and water supply, waste management may be provided by your landlord. Many potential changes will require

their co-operation, from moving to a **green electricity** supplier, installing better facilities for cyclists, using **recycled toilet paper** to making space for a recycling bin.

- Once you've got your first key ideas clear then ask for a meeting. Try to anticipate the likely problems and benefits of the change to the landlord – and be ready with facts and counter-arguments – or an offer to do some of the legwork.
- Find some allies: speak to other tenants in the building – particularly if the changes you propose are likely to benefit them. If you can approach the landlord with the support of fellow tenants, you are more likely to get a positive response.





Making it happen and the five main issues

So what do we actually do...?

Making real change means getting everyone involved. But as well as having a good process to deliver change we also need to be clear on exactly what needs to change and how. This section of this guide looks at the issues that we suggest you focus on.

The Every Action Counts programme divides 'the environment' into five key areas:

- **Save energy:** Saving energy will save you money and this is where you can play your part in tackling climate change.
- **Save resources:** Cutting down on waste makes sense at every level – you spend less on unnecessary products and less on waste disposal.
- **Shop ethically:** Every office needs to buy certain goods and services: making green and ethical choices can also stimulate the local economy.
- **Travelling wisely:** Transport, especially cars, is a major source of pollution. Public transport is good for the community; cycling and walking are good for people's health!
- **Care for your area:** Your organisation can have a positive effect on the neighbourhood where you are based.

This guide also includes a separate section on saving water.

Each of these is a big issue in itself and effective action could take a lot of time and energy. A key part of your action planning is therefore to find the things that you can do quickly and easily that will make the most



difference and cost least money. Some of these may be fairly obvious behaviour changes but others may not, so regular reinforcement of the message is important.

"We are very small (3 staff) so we simply decided on a few simple but effective measures: not to print every email we receive; discarded paper to be recycled or used as scrap; place all plastic, glass, cardboard, waste food in recycling bins; turn off all lights and electrical equipment when we close the office; we walk to and from our office to then take public transport. The big challenge was to turn off the computers when we left the office - but we keep encouraging each other with a simple post-it-note stuck on the monitor as a reminder. It works!!!"

Kurdistan Refugee Women's Organisation, London



Source: Heeley City Farm

Energy and climate change

Saving energy is central to avoiding the worst effects of **climate change**. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) released by the burning of oil products, coal, and gas is responsible for about ²/₃ of all the warming resulting from human activity. The UK and the EU are developing ambitious targets to cut CO₂ emissions by 60% or even 80% by 2050 (and some scientists are calling for faster cuts). To meet these targets every community will need to play its part, even if that does

seem to be a small one.

The key challenge is simple: reduce energy use in the office. The majority of energy use is in buildings. This can be done in three ways:

- Changing working habits.
- Increasing the **energy efficiency** of the office through simple improvements.
- Changing your electricity supply to a **'green' electricity** supplier that buys electricity from renewable sources.

Getting started

Energy is mainly used for heating, lighting, appliances and ventilation. Every computer, light and copier left on overnight is a few pence more on the electricity bill and a little more CO₂ in the atmosphere. It's that simple! But getting people out of bad habits and into good ones takes time, effort and positive leadership. Building high levels of awareness about switching off appliances is a first step (that never stops!). If you have an electricity meter, start to keep a record of monthly readings so that you can show the savings that are being made.

"A 100 year old building came up for sale nearby. We bought it and refurbished it to show what can be done to an ordinary terraced house in an inner city neighbourhood. For us, energy is highly political: it's about global warming, poverty, equity, employment and much more. Our 'Energy House' is a means to engage a wide range of people ranging from the overseas tourist to our town to the fuel poor family in a badly insulated house."
Heeley City Farm, Sheffield



Source: Heeley City Farm

Heating

Heating is likely to be your main energy cost. There is scope for real savings in most offices so:

- Check the thermostats. You don't need to heat an office above 19 - 21°C nor your hot water supply above 60°C. Anything higher is wasteful.
- Check timers so that heating only comes on when the office is occupied. Make sure that you're not heating the office over the weekend.
- Cut the draughts. Check the office is well insulated and **draught-proofed**, identify the problem spots and take action.

Lighting

Use natural light wherever possible. Then use the best appropriate lighting systems:

- **Low energy light-bulbs** should be standard.

Key Action Points

(check the website for more advice)

Now

- Turn down the thermostat to 19 - 21° C.
- Install energy-saving light bulbs.
- Turn off everything at night.

Soon

- Switch to a **green electricity** supply (or speak to your landlord if you don't buy energy directly).
- Set an annual target to reduce your CO₂ emissions, and monitor progress.

Later

- Review the **insulation** of your building.
- Ensure all new equipment is the most **energy-efficient**.



Source: Groundwork UK

- Ensure that light fittings help direct light to where it is needed.
- Fit timers or **motion-sensitive switches** to cut lighting when it's not needed.

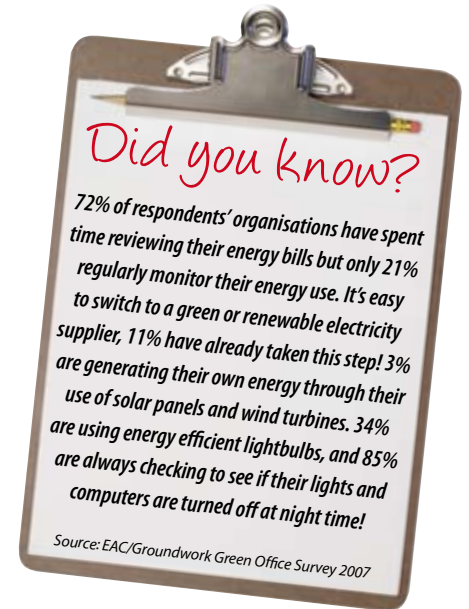
Air conditioning

Many offices use more energy in July than in January due to air conditioning. Keep this under control:

- Only use **air conditioning** when it's really necessary.
- Keep the windows open.
- Don't cool an office below 24°C.

"Some time ago we introduced the 'Green Fairy' to remind and reward staff and volunteers about green practice, who 'visits' areas where monitors and lights are left on and leaves a little note to remind or thank people for considering their energy use. We are trying to encourage everyone to think of themselves as Green Fairies so as to improve ownership. Recently the Green Fairy joined forces with 'Dr Green', for any questions and suggestions staff have, which we then answer or trial a new way of working, getting feedback at the next meeting on how well it's working (or not!)" Nottingham CVS

Source: Nottingham CVS



Source: EAC/Groundwork Green Office Survey 2007

Here's some help

- **Community Action for Energy (café):** The programme most suitable for EAC members - promoting community-based sustainable energy projects by EAC partner Centre for Sustainable Energy. www.energysavingtrust.co.uk/cafe
- **Energy Saving Trust:** Offers information on energy efficiency, renewable energy and travel plans for local authorities and domestic energy users. www.energysavingtrust.co.uk
- **The Carbon Trust:** Website offers useful "Save Energy, Save Money" starter packs of advice, posters and stickers for larger organisations in the public sector and businesses. www.carbontrust.org.uk
- **Calculate your carbon footprint** www.carboncalculator.com www.safeclimate.net/calculator



Waste and resources

The UK produces around 330 million tonnes of waste annually - a quarter of which is from households and business. The bad news is that this figure is growing at around 3% each year and the waste we produce would fill the Albert Hall every half an hour. Each person produces an average 517 kilos / year (up from 450 kilos ten years ago) – that’s about 100 full bin bags each! The good news is that about 113 kilos of that is recycled (about twice as much as

just four years ago), but around 70% of UK waste is still dumped in holes in the ground (all figures from Defra).

Now landfill space is running out, and new laws to cut waste mean that disposal costs are rising. Decaying waste releases methane, a gas that contributes to **climate change**, and many communities are campaigning against incinerators. It all makes sense to cut as much so-called ‘waste’ as we can.

The key objectives are to minimise waste and maximise recycling. Getting into the reuse and recycling habit is a key part of making changes. Plan your work around the **‘waste hierarchy’**. This starts with

- Reducing the amount of waste we produce, moves on to
- Reuse (of goods such as furniture etc.) and
- Recycle (of all sorts of materials). Only then should materials be thrown away.

Getting started

Find out about **local recycling services**. If you are a charity your council may offer a free service. Ask as these services are not always publicised. Otherwise there is a charge for recycling but you can offset costs by reusing items and using the savings you make by using less energy. Look for social or community enterprises collecting materials. They will give advice and supply collection facilities (bags, bins etc). If not, there are commercial companies. Do you know how much ‘waste’ you are producing? A simple **waste audit** helps highlight areas for improvement and provides information to measure change against.

Reduce

An easy first step is to cut paper waste. About 70% of office waste is paper, so:

Saving Paper

- Use scrap paper for notes rather than copier paper.
- Encourage double-sided printing and photocopying – people may need training on this.
- Do you really need to print everything out?
- Use email for sending out reports and also put a copy on your website for people to read or download if you



Source: Groundwork UK

have one.

Other materials

- Reduce packaging waste – buy frequently purchased items in bulk.
- Choose refillable products or concentrates.
- Find out how to dispose of toner cartridges, batteries, electrical equipment, telephones and chemicals in an environmentally responsible manner. Contact your local authority for information.
- Draw up **purchasing** guidelines that reduce waste as part of your **procurement** work.

Reuse

- Hire infrequently used equipment or share items with others in a multi-

Key Action Points

(check the website for more advice)

Now

- Run a **paper-saving campaign**.

Soon

- Set up an **office paper recycling scheme**.

Later

- Do a **waste audit** and build **waste reduction** into your **action plan**.



Source: Jo Pearce

tenant building.

- Leasing electronic equipment (photocopiers, computers etc) means that maintenance and end-of-life disposal is someone else's responsibility.
- Reuse packaging materials.
- Donate unwanted equipment to community groups, resource centres, **furniture reuse** projects, charity outlets, tool re-use schemes, **scrapstores** or schools for creative use.

"Implementing recycling of waste paper and cardboard has reduced our office waste production by 66%. This has reduced costs and improved staff morale. We have started to compost kitchen and garden waste and will start recycling plastic milk containers next week. Improvements to our insulation is also being implemented and Powerdown equipment will be installed this year".

Western Challenge Housing Association, Christchurch, Dorset

Recycle

- Set up a **recycling collection** if you are

not already doing this. Seek advice from your local council or recycling companies. Check out collection arrangements and issues around storage and fire risks.

- Make it easy for people to recycle with clear information.
- Run an informal awareness session – a **'One Bin Day' challenge** gives a stark visual illustration of just how much waste one office can generate. Restricting the availability of office bins to one location for one day can spur people into reuse and recycling.

Here's some help

- **Community Recycling Network UK:** a membership organisation promoting community based sustainable waste management www.crn.org.uk

- **Computer Aid International:** Recycles unwanted computers from Britain for use in schools and community organisations in the developing world.

www.computeraid.org

- **Furniture Re-use Network (FRN):** over 400 re-use organisations across the UK collect items for re-use.

www.frn.org.uk

- **Greenworks:** Services include a furniture disposal and collection service for redundant office furniture. Offer re-made items and office furniture. www.green-works.co.uk

- **Recycle Now:** National recycling awareness campaign. Includes a guide to recycled products.

www.recyclenow.com

- **Waste Watch:** Lots of useful information on waste issues and practical action to reduce waste.

www.wastewatch.org.uk

Did you know?

Only 6% of respondents' organisations have never recycled paper from their office. In fact there is lots of recycling activity going on from cardboard, to glass, to printer and toner cartridges, to furniture and computers. However, only 30% of respondents have tried their hand at food waste recycling despite how easy it can be!

Source: EAC/Groundwork Green Office Survey 2007



Shopping ethically and procurement

Every organisation buys products and services to help fulfil its purpose. Everything you buy has environmental and social impacts. So the objectives are simple: cut the use of unnecessary items and increase your purchasing of products that have a minimal environmental impact and are ethical where possible.

Green and ethical purchasing sends out a positive signal that your organisation takes its environmental and social

responsibilities seriously. You are leading by example and reflecting the values of your organisation. Small organisations may not think they can exert much influence through their buying power but any change helps. Current trade practices also create an 'uneven playing field' – your commitment can help change this.

There are always reasons not to change, including perceived cost and the idea that green products are somehow not as

'good'. Much of this may be more about 'purchasing inertia', fear of change and a lack of organisational commitment. If there is opposition your 'green team' will need to do some planning and perhaps stress the wider social dimensions as a way to get support.

A formal **purchasing policy** may be necessary within certain organisations but informal commitment can be just as effective. The key is taking action whether you have a policy or not.

"We run a dance school and we have bought in tap shoes which we loan to parents for their children at a one off membership, we change the shoes as the child grows. This saves money for parents, is environmentally friendly as we are not trying to continually sell shoes and saves our time in ordering shoes."
Dance on Broadway, London

Getting started

Working in a team is critical for purchasing decisions. Involving the office manager and people at the operational end is essential. Top level commitment is equally important, especially if a switch to certain products may take time or cost a little more. Change your purchasing in easy stages:

- Carry out a review of your current purchasing to determine scope for including or expanding **'green'** purchasing options.
- Identify actions that can be taken short, medium and long-term.
- Start with a few products (paper is a good starter) and bring in more as experience is gained or cost savings achieved.
- Question whether certain products are really required or whether a lower production specification would still be 'fit for purpose'.
- Work on developing a longer term **procurement strategy** that looks at all the goods and services you buy.



Myth: "Recycled paper jams photocopiers"
Fact: Today's recycled paper is high quality and technically perfected for use in copiers. If the paper jams it is usually not because of the recycled content. Paper may have sat open for a long time and absorbed moisture or not been kept flat. The paper may not be formulated for use in copiers, especially high-speed. Check the label and specification. The photocopier may need cleaning or adjusting. If it is still a problem try another brand of **recycled paper**.

Many of the products you may want to buy are labelled with a range of 'kite marks' and eco-labels.

Recycled products

Using recycled products does not mean compromising on performance. Obtaining accurate information and a product 'fit for purpose' helps break the myths, as can 'blind' product testing. Many specifications ask for more than is necessary or are based on aesthetics rather than on performance.

- Make a public commitment to reduce waste and buy recycled products whenever possible.
- Make a statement with any publicity materials or promotional products – use pens or pencils or bags made with recycled materials.
- Specify items that can be reused or recycled at the end of their lifespan.
- Give preference to products that contain a high recycled content.
- Be flexible in your specifications; the scope for purchasing certain items may

- alter due to new information or product availability.
- Ask suppliers for samples for product trials to check equipment compatibility.
- Consider 'blind testing' for recycled paper to avoid preconceived judgements.

Other 'environment-friendly' products and services

There are now many other products available with a reduced environmental impact.

- Choose **ecological cleaning products**.
- Reduce use of disposables and invest in proper glasses, cups, plates and cutlery – or hire these when they are needed.
- Use **rechargeable batteries** or choose mercury / cadmium free options.
- Buy **remanufactured toner cartridges**.
- Support printing services that address environmental issues (check that they use recycled paper, vegetable inks and have an accredited **Environmental Management System**).
- Use tap water (maybe cooled and

filtered) instead of bottled water.

- Shop around for competitively priced products – avoid suppliers who put a price premium on 'green' products.
- Consider energy use in all purchases of equipment.

"All our office furniture has been donated, we use environmentally friendly washing powder and cleaning products, all our cardboard is recycled. We print on recycled paper and use recycled paper envelopes. Our ink cartridges are recycled and we purchase refilled ones. We also try to use local companies whenever possible."

Fenland Community Laundry Service, Cambridgeshire.

Fair trade

Most organisations buy tea, coffee, sugar, and biscuits. All are available fairly traded. Buying these products is one way of showing that your organisation can help make a difference. The **Fairtrade Mark** is a guarantee of a fair deal for farmers and workers in some of the poorest countries of the world. It also sends out a clear message that the present unjust global trade rules are not acceptable. The Fair Trade Foundation has launched a workplace awareness campaign – their suggestions include:

- Agree to buy products carrying the **Fairtrade Mark**.
- Find out where to buy Fairtrade products. Many office supply companies now stock Fairtrade products. Check out local stores, fair trade outlets such as Traidcraft shops and the Fair Trade Foundation website. A local Fair Trade Group may also be able to help.
- Hold a tea and coffee tasting event or a chocolate and snack sampling session for an afternoon break.
- Implement a Fair Trade policy in your workplace and publicise it. Use Fair Trade products at external events too.



Source: Groundwork UK

"We became concerned about the outrageous waste of food at conferences. We often had to dispose of several bags of untouched food, due to over-ordering or people just not turning up. We have started to under-order to cope with this and have never been caught out and would recommend others do likewise."

York CVS

Buy local

Buying local helps cut down on unnecessary transport, creates local employment and helps celebrate seasonality and local distinctiveness. If your organisation is there to support your locality, then buying from local suppliers is an entirely legitimate part of your work.

- Support local social enterprises, co-operatives or small suppliers for food and catering requirements, green office supplies, recycling services, materials and maintenance work etc.
- Share knowledge – compile a checklist for others in your network about local suppliers, how to run a 'greener' event etc.
- Ensure service providers such as cleaning contractors have ethical policies regarding working terms and conditions.

Key Action Points

(check the website for more advice)

Now

- Try out fairly traded tea and coffee.
- Buy **recycled paper**.
- Review your current purchasing.

Soon

- Look at potential local suppliers who you do not currently use.

Later

- Develop a procurement strategy to benefit the environment and the community.

Here's some help

- **Cafe direct:** Fairly traded products. www.cafedirect.co.uk
- **Fairtrade Foundation:** Awards the Fairtrade mark to appropriate products and co-ordinates the annual Fair Trade Fortnight. Website includes details of local groups, plus supplier, distributor and caterers lists. www.fairtrade.org.uk and www.fairtradeatwork.org.uk
- **Forest Stewardship Council (FSC):** Certification scheme and information on wood products from sustainable managed forests. www.fsc.org
- **Green Stationery Company:** Promotes itself as having the UK's largest range of recycled paper and green office supplies. www.greenstat.co.uk
- **Greenyouoffice.co.uk:** Wide range of products to 'enable you to transform your workplace into a socially and environmentally responsible place to be'. www.greenyouoffice.co.uk
- **Paperback:** the only UK paper seller specialising in recycled papers. www.paperback.coop
- **Recycled Paper Supplies:** Specialist suppliers of recycled paper, card, envelopes, craft and card-making products. www.recycled-paper.co.uk
- **Recycled Products Guide:** UK Directory of recycled products. www.recycledproducts.org.uk
- **The Phone Co-op:** Telecoms provider owned by customers promoting a climate-neutral and ethical service. www.thephone.coop
- **Traidcraft:** Fair trade pioneers since 1979. www.traidcraftshop.co.uk



Source: Groundwork UK

Travelling wisely

Transport issues are mostly about people getting to and from the office and work-related travel. Car travel is the biggest cause of urban air pollution and produces a major part of the UK's CO2 emissions so it makes sense for any office to do what it can, especially since the statistics are mostly moving in the wrong direction. The proportion of trips made by car has gone up from 61% to 64% over the last decade, while trips made on foot declined by 16% (Source: Department of Transport).

Getting started

The key point is pretty simple: reduce car use (especially single person travel) to that which is necessary. Quite what is necessary and what the alternatives are will of course depend on the local circumstances, most obviously about whether you are in an urban or rural area. If you are a larger organisation then you should look at developing a '**green travel plan**' but the following points will get you started.

There are clearly limits on the pressure any organisation can put on staff as to how they travel to and from work: the way forward is more about offering positive incentives rather than restricting use. The alternatives to individual car travel can be summed up as:

- **Public transport**
- Walking and **Cycling**
- **Car Sharing**

There may also be issues for larger organisations around the use of company vehicles (vans and mini-buses) and of couriers and taxis.

Public transport

There are some obvious action points here:

- Publicise the ways to get to your office and events by public transport on your literature, website etc.
- Make sure all staff and volunteers (as part of induction) know where the local buses go – supply everyone with a map of local services.
- Offer **interest-free loans** for season tickets which can help people choose this option.
- Don't hold events in places which are not accessible by public transport – avoid those big hotels that are at motorway junctions.

"Our committee have agreed to buy the manager a train and bus pass so she can use her bike when travelling to meetings. It does work out cheaper but it is because it is greener that she wants to do it."

Choice Advocacy, Bradford

Walking

It's free and healthy, but it needs to be safe. Publicise the best way to walk to your office but bear in mind that some people will feel less safe about walking than others.



Cycling

It's cheap and even healthier. Encourage staff to cycle by providing secure bike storage space. Better still, provide changing (and shower) facilities for people to use when they arrive at work (this may need to wait until you're upgrading a building).

- Offer staff a mileage allowance for bike use.
- Refund the cost of cycle helmets.
- Have an '**office bike**' if there are various short journeys to be made.
- Talk to local cycle groups or council staff about free training and maintenance events.





Car-sharing

This can be done in many ways. Identify staff who live near each other and who need to drive and encourage them to share the driving. If staff use cars as part of their work, set up an office diary and look for ways to make one journey serve one or more purposes. If your organisation needs a car occasionally, check out your local '**car club**'.

Office vehicles

If you use vehicles there are some important points:

- Keep them well maintained (well-inflated tyres save energy!).
- Ensure the responsible disposal of car oil, tyres and all other parts.

If you do use taxis and courier services try and minimise their use. Use cycle couriers where possible and watch for taxi firms that are 'going green' and support them.

Controlling car use

You can take positive action by refusing to provide parking facilities except for disabled staff and visitors (assuming there are public transport options). You can also work to develop and agree a policy to cut business travel by car if public transport options exist.

"We have adopted an environmental policy and taken positive steps to improve our 'greenness' through conducting a social audit - this applied to the whole organisation. As the lead on the social accounting, I used it as a way of including a section on the environment in our organisation's strategic plan. One direct consequence of this has been the installation of a bike park with racks and locks available to borrow and agreement for a company mileage rate for people using bikes on company business."
Soft Touch Arts, Leicester

Key Action Points

(check the website for more advice)

Now

- Discuss minimising car use.
- Promote public transport to staff and visitors.

Soon

- Set up **season ticket loans**.
- Set up **secure cycle parking**.

Later

- Develop a **changing area for cyclists**.
- Cut down on unnecessary car parking.

Here's some help

- **Carplus:** Information, advice and support to communities involved in developing car share clubs and promoting responsible car use to reduce carbon emissions. www.carplus.org.uk
- **CTC:** the UK's national cyclists' organisation www.ctc.org.uk
- **National TravelWise Association:** can advise on green travel plans www.travelwise.org.uk
- **Sustrans:** UK's leading sustainable transport charity, working to offer people more choice in travel options that benefit their health and the environment. Responsible for the National Cycle Network – find out if there is a local link. www.sustrans.org.uk
- **Walking Works:** A Living Streets initiative to inspire people to walk more as part of their daily commute to work. www.walkingworks.org.uk



Care for where you live (and work!)

Your office may be at the heart of the community in which you all live and work or it may be in anonymous city centre office block. But wherever you are there are probably ways in which you can make a positive contribution to the local surroundings. There are broadly three issues to consider:

- The immediate grounds and surroundings for which you are responsible;
- **Public spaces** in the nearby community.
- Engagement in local community action.

Some people and organisations may be surprised to see you getting involved, but leading by example can make a very positive contribution.

Your surroundings

If you are responsible for any open space think about greening them and keeping it well maintained. If it's just a yard you could still have some plants (dig a bed or bring in planter troughs) or even a tree or two. If you have got room to plant then:

- Plant low-water or **drought resistant** plants to minimise maintenance and water use.

- Put in some insect attracting plants and bird boxes.

These actions will create a more attractive workplace and will in the long-term, help improve the **biodiversity** of the area.

"We have installed solar panels and we have developed a garden with environmental planting where there was previously asphalt and concrete. Three 700 litre water butts collect rainwater from the roof for the garden. We also recycle many items (paper, card, plastic bottles, cans, glass).

Hilldrop Area Community Association, London N7

Public spaces in the nearby community

Civic responsibility starts here! Discuss how the office might support local projects to improve the local environment. You might want to organise or support a clean-up of local **green space** – as an organisation based in the area you might be well placed to try and get support from other businesses. There may be a 'Friends of the park' group you could work with. This could make a good team building activity – you could involve trustees too.

Key Action Points

(check the website for more advice)

Now

- Make contact with **local environment groups**.
- Publicise local events.

Soon

- Review your immediate surroundings.

Later

- Work to improve any spaces you manage.

Engagement in local community action

Supporting local community activities may well be just what your organisation is about, so look for ways not just to promote them, but also to take part. If there are local fun days, environmental-themed Council events, tree planting sessions etc. Look for ways in which you might be involved as an organisation. There may be fundraising opportunities if you get involved in local sponsored events. You can also encourage staff to look for volunteering opportunities (see below).

You may also want to make contact with local environment and conservation groups. They may have ideas (and even funding) for local action and your office might be able to build new links between these groups and local community groups.

Here's some help

- **BTCV:** Practical environmental action, local opportunities for volunteering etc. www.btcv.org.uk
- **Encams – the 'Tidy Britain Group':** all you need on organising a local clean-up www.encams.org
- **Greenspace:** works to improve parks and green spaces by raising awareness, involving communities and creating skilled professionals. www.green-space.org.uk
- **Groundwork:** Local environmental regeneration activities. www.groundwork.org.uk
- **Wildlife Trusts:** for details of your local Wildlife Trust www.wildlifetrusts.org.uk
- www.cleanersaferegreener.gov.uk: Information resource and guides covering town centres, residential areas and parks and open spaces.



Source: Jo Pearce



Source: Jo Pearce

Saving Water

Saving water may matter more in some parts of the country than others, but with water meters becoming more common it is likely that this will save more and more organisations money. Saving water also saves the energy that is used to treat water, and pump it to your taps.

It's easy to cut water wastage through installing water saving devices and behaviour change.

Any office can also reduce the pollution it causes by avoiding unnecessary chemicals in cleaning, printing etc. and ensuring the appropriate disposal of liquids e.g. oil.

Saving water

This is mostly common sense:

- Mend dripping taps and cisterns.
- Put notices above taps, sinks as water-saving reminders.
- Don't fill kettles more than necessary
- Install water saving devices:
- Start with toilet **cistern volume reducers** such as 'hippos' or 'Save-a-Flush' bags.
- If your office has urinals you can install **waste-saving devices**.
- If you are **upgrading your office** go for **dual flush toilets**.

- If you have a water meter you can monitor and set targets for reducing water use.

"We have a recycling system for all paper, glass, cans, plastic and cardboard. We have energy efficiency stickers on all light switches, computers, plug sockets, and we promote water efficiency by using a water butt and we have stickers on our taps, eco kettle and flush controls in our toilets. We also recycle all stamps, inkjet cartridges and mobile phones for Guide Dogs for the Blind."

Tipton Litterwatch, West Midlands

Cutting pollution

- Use **ecological cleaning products** – buying refillable bottles cuts packaging waste too.

And don't forget:

- Provide tap (or filtered) water at meetings in preference to costly bottled water.

- Capture rainwater via a water-butt for watering office plants or outside space.

"We recently started a book swap scheme allowing us to recycle books. We also began to provide our customers with recycling bins and organic waste bins, save-a-flush bags and energy efficient light bulbs as we recognise we can have an impact on how green our customers are."

Anchor Staying Put, Isle of Wight



Key Action Points

(check the website for more advice)

Now

- Run a water-saving campaign.
- Fix leaking taps.
- Install water-savers in cisterns and toilet systems.

Soon

- Buy and fit a water butt to collect and use rainwater.
- Swap your bottled drinking water dispenser with a plumbed in unit.

Later

- Consider installing low flush and dual flush toilets.
- Consider installing push or motion sensitive controls.



Credit: Hazel Thompson Ethical Property Foundation 3

Moving forward

If you've made a start with some of the ideas in this guide, then don't stop here! It should be clear from the work on your action plan that this is not a work area where you can make a few changes and that's it. Making a real difference will take time and more information, much of which is on the website and in other publications. Some of the areas to look at are:

- **Developing your Action Plan**
Your action plan should be a 'live' document to help you deliver real change with both quick wins and longer-term targets.
- **Keeping it going**
It's important to give feedback to staff

and volunteers on how things are going. Encourage staff and volunteers to keep to their changed behaviours by using visual reminders.

- **Working with members and networks**

If you're doing this work, then don't keep it within the office. Share what you do with other groups and the people who use your services.

"At the moment we are looking at an EMS (Environmental Management System) to manage the environmental impact of our business, and ensure we comply with legislative regulations and for which NCVS

can achieve an externally recognised accreditation. As well as showing the commitment NCVS has to the environment, making sure we comply with relevant legislation and putting NCVS once again at the forefront of good practice in the sector, the accreditation will give the 'Green Group' additional focus and regular items to work on. Part of any EMS involves developing an Environmental Policy; something funders are also starting to ask for and a document we developed last year".
Nottingham CVS

- **Spreading the message wider**

Whoever you work with you have a chance to encourage them to take action. The EAC website has lots of ideas for local organisations. Encourage groups to register on the EAC site so that they get support and information.

- **Getting organised – Environmental Management**

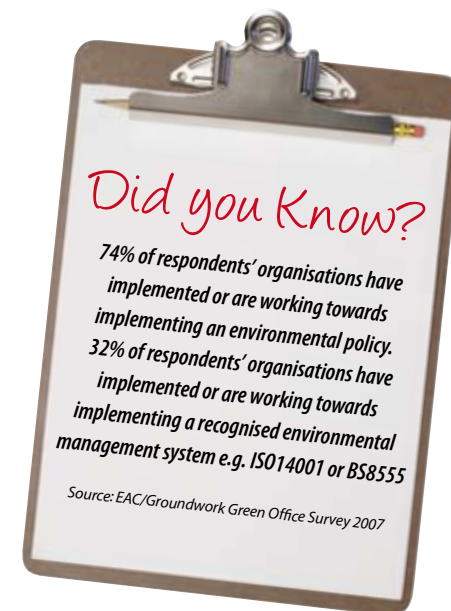
If your organisation does want to take this further then one good way is to develop an accredited **EMS (Environmental Management System)**. This will need time and money but if you are running a sizeable building then the savings can be substantial. See the website for more information.

"Lots of local groups use the meeting rooms in our building, so we put out a collection box for plastic milk and soft drink bottles. The response has been great and each week we take home at least one carrier bag, full to the brim, to recycle. It's just a small job but around 52 carrier bags full of plastic are now saved from landfill every year – and that's from just one floor of one building!"
Chelmsford CVS

- **Moving on?** The EAC website includes guidance on what to do if and when you are moving or refurbishing your

office. This is an excellent time to make some longer-term changes and invest in improvements.

"At Groundwork West London we've seen many benefits from investing time in gaining accreditation to the internationally recognized environmental management system – ISO14001. This year our main environmental objectives are to divert more of our waste from the office and projects from landfill, reduce our CO2 emissions, improve biodiversity on our projects, increase the use of LPG vehicles, and improve our green procurement. Having ISO14001 is helping us to secure more project funding and contracts and is a really good motivator for the staff who want to see us pushing ourselves in our 'green' performance. Our efforts have also been recognized in the Mayor of London Green Procurement Awards."
Groundwork West London.



General resources and further reading

The purpose of this section is to 'signpost' further sources of information and help. There is a lot out there and it can be hard to know where to start. Different groups will have varying information needs. The important thing is to use up-to-date information and start to make some changes.

Finding out what's happening locally is important too. Contact local community organisations, look at your local council website, community newspapers and information sources, environment centres etc. If something isn't listed it doesn't mean work isn't going on.

Find out if the council has an environment officer and speak to them.

Every Action Counts

Register on this site and you'll be kept updated on green issues relevant to the VCS. www.everyactioncounts.org.uk

www.direct.gov.uk

The official government guide to everything about green living.

www.direct.gov.uk/en/Environmentandgreenerliving/index.htm

Defra

The government department responsible for environmental issues.

www.defra.gov.uk

Green labels and claims information

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/consumerprod/publications/index.htm

Environment Agency

Leading public organisation responsible for protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales. www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Envirowise

Practical environmental advice for business but larger VCS organisations may also find the information useful. Published 'Green Officiency: running a cost-effective, environmentally aware office' in 2002.

www.envirowise.gov.uk

Global Action Plan

An environmental charity that helps people to make positive changes at home, at work, and in the wider community.

www.globalactionplan.org.uk

Friends of the Earth

Publications include 'The Good Wood Guide'.

www.foe.co.uk

Ethical Consumer

Lots of valuable advice on making the right procurement choices.

www.ethicalconsumer.org

Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS)

Details about a more formal approach to environmental management programmes for making and measuring progress.

www.emas.org.uk



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