



Commitment 2

Contribute to the creation of healthy and sustainable places, including taking action on climate change

Key Takeaway

ELFT's new Green Plan (2025–2028) strengthens our commitment to creating healthier, low-carbon environments that support both physical and mental wellbeing.

Initiatives such as Twinwoods Rewilding, the Gardening Forum, increased recycling and solar installations show how improving green spaces and reducing environmental harm benefits recovery and staff wellbeing.

By expanding access to nature and building climate-resilient places, we are helping communities to feel safer, healthier and more connected.

2025 Highlights:

ELFT publishes new Green Plan (2025–2028):

The next three-year phase of ELFT's Green Plan sets out actions to accelerate progress toward net zero.

Rewilding Twinwoods through the NHS

Forest scheme: ELFT staff, service users and contractors planted over 150 trees at Twinwoods Resource Centre as part of the NHS Forest programme. This helps create biodiverse, therapeutic green spaces.

Expanding green spaces through the ELFT

Gardening Group: The gardening group gives staff the opportunity to start projects, seek support, share ideas and learn from experts. This includes support to secure funding, choose suitable plants and involve green-space activities in Service User care.

Oakly Court increase recycling: Oakley Court, an inpatient ward in Bedford and Luton, worked

with service users to improve sustainability by increasing the percentage of items recycled from 11% to 22.5%. The team streamlined recycling bins, increased recycling signage and trialled education on recycling for staff and service users.





Trust Awarded £1m Solar Panels Funding:

ELFT successfully bid for funding to install solar panels at the Newham Centre for Mental Health and at the John Howard Centre for Mental Health in Hackney, with potential 20 year saving of between £1.75-82 million.

Fit for the Future: 10 Year Health Plan for England

The 10-Year Health Plan for England reaffirms the goal of a net-zero health service by 2040/2045 and the need to strengthen preparedness for climate-related risks. The Plan also promotes a shift toward community-based, preventative care, reducing waste and embedding environmental considerations within regulation and clinical guidance. Further priorities include cleaner transport, improved air quality, and addressing hazards in the built environment, such as damp and mould.

ELFT as a Marmot Trust

Our climate and sustainability work embodies Marmot's principle that environmental action and health equity must go hand in hand. Environmental hazards such as heat, pollution and poor-quality urban spaces disproportionately affect those already facing disadvantage. By creating healthier, greener and more resilient environments, we not only reduce these inequities but also help communities to thrive.



Why is this important?

Climate change is described as the greatest global health threat of the 21st century. Its impacts are felt locally and fall hardest on people who are already vulnerable. For the NHS, this means rising demand and greater pressure on essential services.

Across the UK, more frequent heatwaves, poor air quality and flooding are already affecting physical and mental health. NHS England estimates heat-related mortality costs of £6.8 billion a year, projected to rise sharply without action.

In East London, Luton and Bedfordshire, dense neighbourhoods experience the urban heat-island effect, making heat episodes more dangerous and worsening air quality. Heavy rainfall increases the likelihood of surface-water flooding and disruption to homes, transport and services. These impacts are most significant for older adults, people with long-term conditions or disabilities, children and those experiencing deprivation or homelessness.

Access to green space can help protect health by reducing heat, improving air quality and supporting mental wellbeing, social connection and recovery. Cleaner air policies show measurable health benefits, including fewer respiratory illnesses.



Case Studies

Interview with Craig Donohoe, ELFT Climate Change Champion

There are lots of reasons I got involved. I did my master's degree in climate change. Climate is where my real expertise and passion are. Being part of the Trust's sustainability work lets me bring that passion back into my life and help co-produce solutions.

Being a climate champion gives you purpose. For people who've had mental health challenges, feeling that you can make a difference gives your life meaning. It makes you want to get out of bed, get out of the house and engage with the world.

It's good to connect to nature. It's really important that we set a vision of what a healthier, low-carbon society looks like. I co-lead a walking group in Luton which is an example of that future society—people walking on green paths, connecting socially and exercising within their limits. Through regenerating the green spaces at ELFT, they can be places where we walk, garden, create art, and reconnect with nature.

These projects really change people's lives.

On the walks, people who are isolated make friends. You talk for two hours and really get to know each other. It even helped me appreciate my own town more... Gardening projects do the same: people take ownership of a space, create things, and it becomes therapeutic.

What more could the Trust do? Travel together more, revitalise every green space, hold more community events outdoors, and help staff use their passions for the environment in their work.

One idea that could make a big difference. A big walking challenge along the River Lea—from Bedfordshire to East London. Staff and service users together, connecting our directorates, re-energising people, raising funds for more gardening projects, and showing what population health can look like: people in nature, exercising and connecting.





Environmental and Financial Sustainability in the Forensics Directorate

The Forensics Directorate launched the “Net Zero Waste” QI project, known as Utensils R Us, to reduce single-use plastics and improve the sustainability of kitchen practices across all wards. The project aimed for a 90% reduction in disposable use by 2025.

Using QI methods, the team introduced changes including reusable cutlery, installing dishwashers on every ward, improved stock-checking, dedicated ordering systems, and regular reviews with service users. These interventions also addressed longstanding challenges such as over-ordering, unmanaged stock and lack of awareness about the financial and environmental impact of disposables.

Impact

Monthly dry-goods costs fell from £40,735 to £16,273 — a 60% reduction, saving around £290,000 a year. Cutting disposable use also reduced emissions by 84,000 kg CO₂ annually, equivalent to 53 London–New York round trips

Fountains Court reducing unnecessary prescribing

Fountains Court, an inpatient unit for older adults in Bedfordshire, used Quality Improvement (QI) to reduce unnecessary medication ordering. The team strengthened collaboration with pharmacy, provided regular education for new doctors on overprescribing, and introduced the STOP FRAIL tool—a checklist that helps clinicians review medications for people living with frailty and safely reduce treatments that offer limited benefit.

Impact

Weekly medication orders fell by 30% (from 56 to 39), reducing waste, improving safety and supporting a more person-centred, sustainable approach to prescribing.



Next steps include

Supporting ELFT’s new Green Plan, recognising its importance for population health.

Explore ways to increase green space and how it can support therapeutic alongside environmental benefit.

Continue to develop initiatives looking at increasing the proportion of plant-based nutrition in inpatient settings.

Glossary

Urban Heat-Island (UHI): Built-up areas becoming hotter than surrounding places because buildings and roads trap heat.

Green Social Prescribing: Connecting people with nature-based activities—like gardening or walking—to support mental and physical health.