NICE Listens project on environmental sustainability and linked NICE work

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NICE National Institute for
Health and Care Excellence

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Why environmental sustainability?

"Climate change is undermining every dimension of health monitored" and "increasing the fragility of the systems that health depends on".

The Lancet Countdown 2022 Report

Annual NHS footprint = 25 million tonnes CO_2e

All healthcare activity incurs an environmental cost, including many areas of activity that NICE can influence
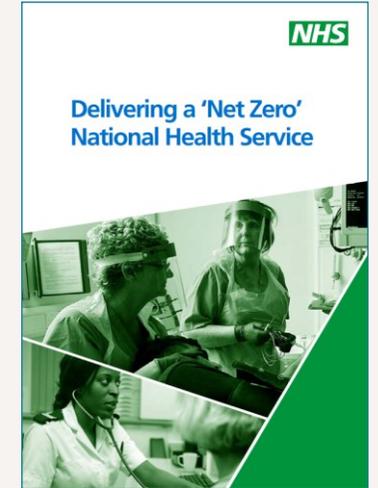
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Environmental sustainability "can provide benefits for patients, providers, the health workforce", "decrease environmental health risks" and "help reduce costs and increase the resilience of health systems".

World Health Organization, 2017

NHS England policies and where NICE can influence

- In 2020, NHS England made net zero commitments
  - by 2040 for carbon emissions the NHS controls directly
  - by 2045 for all carbon emissions including the supply chain

- The Health and Care Act 2022 (section 9, 13NC and 13ND) places duties on the NHS in England to consider climate change when making decisions.

NICE can influence both direct and indirect carbon emissions, and already does so through its guidance and advice products and work to reduce the use of low value care.

By ensuring that care delivered is both necessary and good quality, NICE can help achieve reduced environmental impacts alongside improved patient outcomes and safety.

This aligns benefits for both the patient and the environment and does not require any 'trade-offs' to be made.

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Examples of NICE's existing work on environmental sustainability
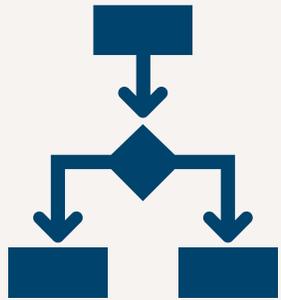
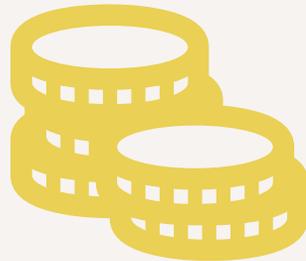Asthma inhaler patient decision aid with environmental impact information

Engagement with system stakeholders (e.g. NHSE Medicines Sustainability Board) and peer agencies (e.g. CADTH)

Resource Impact Assessment pilot for the NICE guideline on Medicines Optimisation (NG5) gives estimates of environmental cost savings

Disseminating our work and demonstrating thought leadership through 3 published articles

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NICE Listens 2nd project – informed public opinion on environmental sustainability in healthcare

- 23 members of the public

- Sampled to reflect a range of backgrounds

- 3 x 2-3 hour online workshops held in October and November 2022

- Pre- and post- workshop tasks and online forum

- Topic expert and NICE steering group input

What is NICE's role and responsibility in making healthcare more environmentally sustainable?
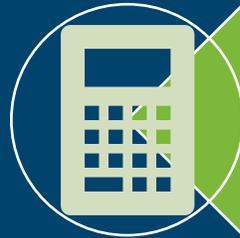
How should NICE take environmental sustainability into account in its decision making?
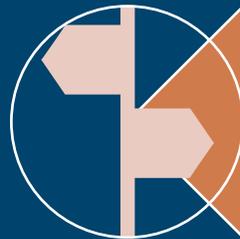
How would the public would like to be involved in making decisions about their healthcare that impact on the environment?

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Results show strong public support for NICE taking responsibility to make healthcare more environmentally sustainable

- … but not at the expense of health outcomes (where such a trade-off exists).

- Support increased as participants learned that sustainable healthcare comes with co-benefits (e.g. reducing burdens on NHS by enabling self-management of conditions).

- Findings align with NICE's core remit to improve outcomes for everyone as well as our commitments to help reduce the carbon footprint of health and care.

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There is also public support for...

- ✓ Actions that help lower the demand for healthcare (e.g. prevention, self-management interventions)

- ✓ Actions to reduce the supply of care that provides no benefit (e.g. "do not offer" recommendations)

- ✓ Information provision on the environmental impact of care options in shared decision-making situations

- ✓ NICE influencing the supply chain to prioritise and encourage green practice

- ✓ Making greener treatment options the default, where appropriate, for newly diagnosed patients (provided there is an opportunity to switch if necessary)

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People find it acceptable to consider the environmental impact of interventions in some circumstances

- When there are already effective treatments available for a condition

- When the condition is not severe

- When the alternative is equally cost effective (i.e. "tie break")

- When the greener option is as clinically effective as the alternative but marginally higher in cost

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Recommendations from NICE Listens: NICE's role and responsibility

1. The following set out how NICE should clarify and communicate our role to ensure transparency and public trust.

   a. Do what we can to reduce the environmental impact of healthcare, in keeping with our remit to optimise resource use to maximise population health outcomes.

   b. Formalise and publicise our responsibility to make healthcare more environmentally sustainable, including reference to the benefits that environmentally sustainable healthcare can provide.

   c. Focus on improving the environmental sustainability of healthcare in ways that also improve health outcomes, respect people's preferences and avoid exacerbating health inequalities.

   d. Ensure full transparency regarding any decisions made in the context of healthcare and environmental sustainability.

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Recommendations from NICE Listens: Existing work to prioritise and build on

2. The following target NICE's activities that aim to reduce the supply of unnecessary healthcare and the demand for care in the first place, thereby reducing the environmental cost.

    a. Identify care that provides no benefit and produce guidance to minimise the provision of such care

    b. Provide and support the implementation of guidance on preventative healthcare and management of chronic conditions.

    c. In shared decision making contexts, provide information for patients about the environmental impacts of different interventions where possible, in ways that account for individual circumstances.

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Recommendations from NICE Listens:
Future change and areas requiring further research

3. The following reflect the public's view on how they would like NICE to act on how and when to take into account the environmental impact of health interventions.

    a. Continue to explore ways to influence the healthcare supply chain to become more sustainable, for example, by encouraging the generation of high quality environmental data while ensuring that we do not promote unsubstantiated sustainability claims.

    b. Identify circumstances in which it is appropriate to consider the environmental impact of a health intervention.

    (continued…)

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Recommendations from NICE Listens:
Future change and areas requiring further research (part 2)

c. In cases where multiple care options exist that are comparable in terms of clinical and cost effectiveness, take into account the environmental sustainability of each option to guide decision making, where possible.

d. Develop ways to make judgements about how the financial and environmental costs of health interventions should be balanced when making recommendations for the NHS.

e. Explore ways to reduce the risk of recommending health interventions that may not deliver the benefits promised but would nevertheless impose environmental costs, for example, by upholding stricter evidence standards for technologies in some circumstances.

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Examples of actions NICE could take, with selected achievable actions linked to NICE Listens recommendations highlighted

- ==Identify relevant environmental considerations==
- Identify evidence to inform committee decisions
- Inclusion of research questions and outcomes relevant to environmental sustainability

- ==Collect and review evidence relevant to achieving environmental sustainability goals==
- ==Update methods to produce value estimates that account for environmental impacts==

- Use as mechanism for ensuring uptake of environmentally sustainable guidance

Topic selection and surveillance → **Scoping** → **Committee recruitment** → **Evidence collation and review** → **Recommendations** → **Quality standards** → **Implementation and impact**

- ==Topic prioritisation==
- Consider sustainability in selection and update decisions
- Retain and update existing outputs with clear environmental sustainability benefits

- Expand and upskill committees to understand environmental impacts
- Empower committees to factor environmental sustainability into decisions

- For branded technology, link to the manufacturer's carbon reduction plan
- Comment on if recommendations support sustainability goals
- ==Highlight 'do not offer' recommendations==
- Identify research recommendations relating to sustainability

- ==Invest in resources for outputs with sustainability benefits==
- ==Expand capabilities of field team to explain sustainability==
- Work with funders to prioritise sustainability-focused research recommendations

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The actions NICE can take are limited by internal and external factors

Limited resources

Lack of robust data and methods

Lack of strategic framework

Competing priorities

In spite of these constraints, we've identified several actions that NICE will, should and could do

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NICE Listens recommendations will be used to guide decisions about:

What NICE

will do

What NICE

should do

What NICE

could do

e.g. evidence summary
on desflurane
(by end of 2023)

e.g. targeted update to
NICE Principles
(in the next 2 years)

e.g. collect and use
environmental data
(ahead of 2028)

2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
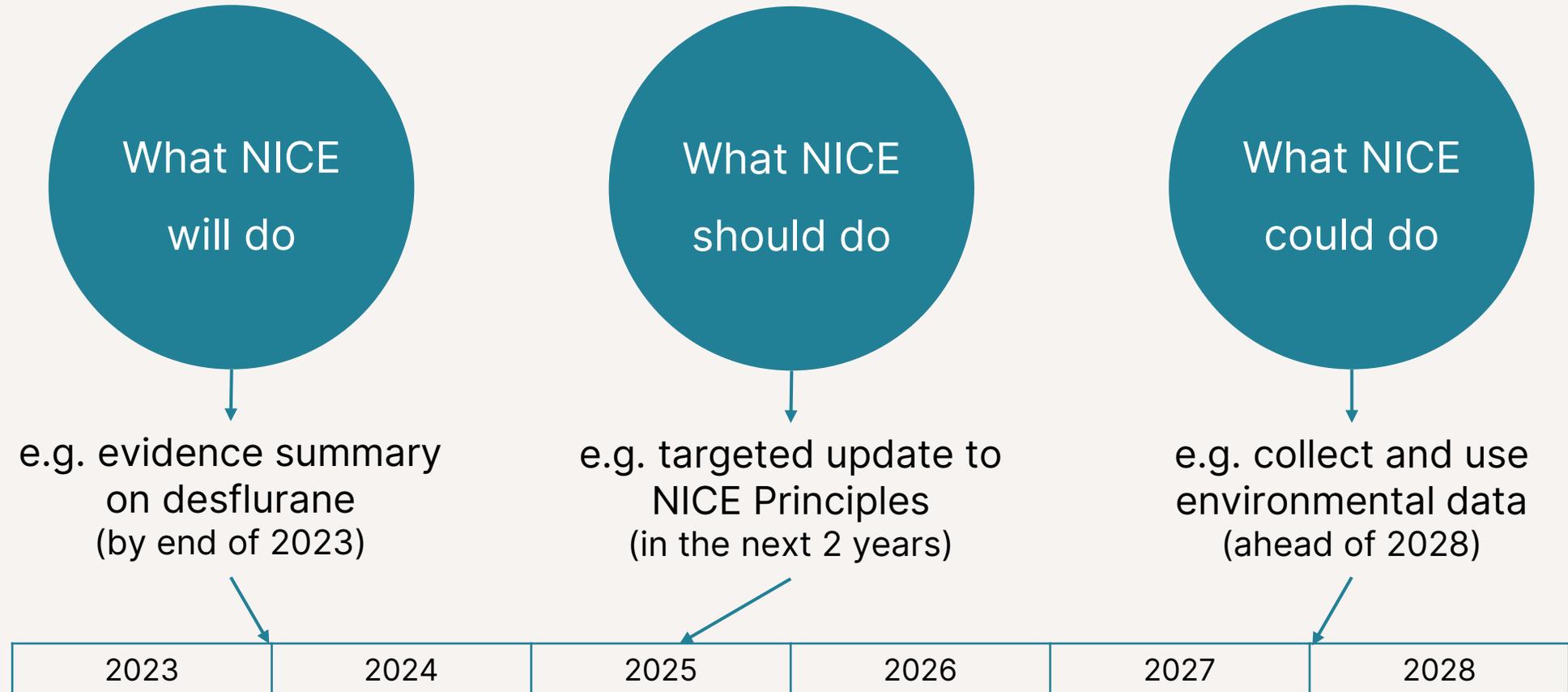
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NICE will produce an evidence summary on desflurane

NHS England has announced the decommissioning of desflurane by early 2024

First medicine to be decommissioned by NHS in England due to global warming potential

Nick Watts • 1st
Chief Sustainability Officer at NHS
2mo •

Yesterday, with the support of the Royal College of Anaesthetists and the Association of Anaesthetists, NHS England announced the decommissioning of desflurane by early 2024.

523   26 comments • 76 reposts

Desflurane has at least 40 times the carbon footprint of alternative agents.

This will help inform NHSE policy on whether any exceptional circumstances exist where it is acceptable to use desflurane. NICE's involvement is helping to ensure that patient outcomes and safety are not compromised.
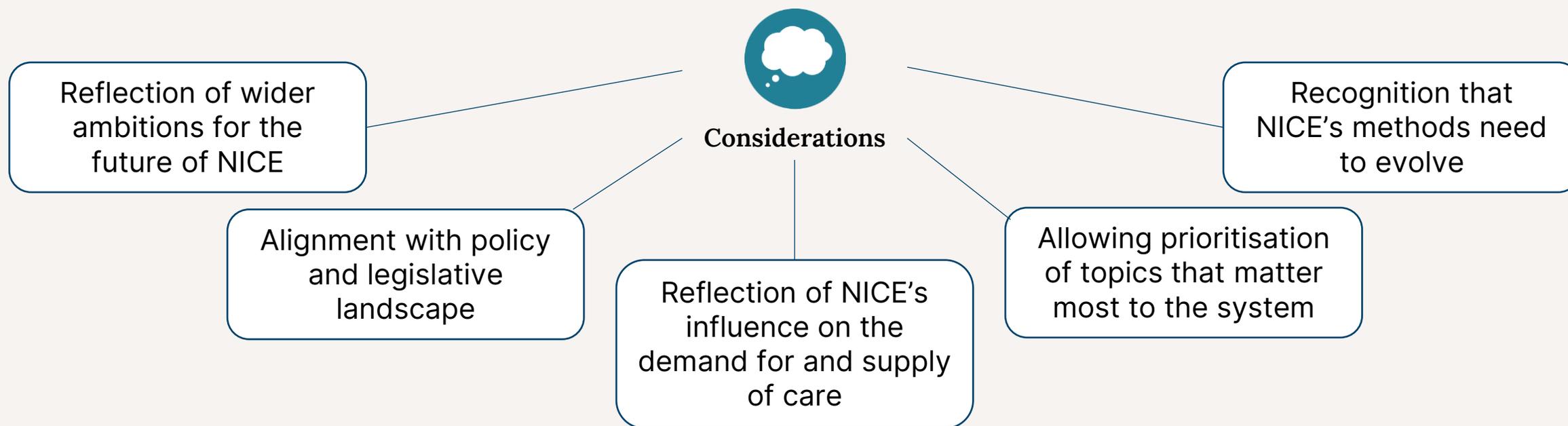
Putting anaesthetic emissions to bed: commitment on desflurane

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NICE should make a targeted update to its Principles

Principles should guide how NICE can align environmental sustainability to its core remit, and maximise the patient, system and planetary benefits associated with its work.

Any commitments made should consider the following:

Considerations

Reflection of wider ambitions for the future of NICE

Recognition that NICE's methods need to evolve

Alignment with policy and legislative landscape

Reflection of NICE's influence on the demand for and supply of care

Allowing prioritisation of topics that matter most to the system

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Proposed environmental commitments that could form basis for updated Principles

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Work in alignment with statutory NHS and social care sustainability guidance and take account of planned national-level procurement practice changes

Acknowledge that the consumption of care leads to environmental costs as well as financial and human health costs

As NICE moves forward as an organisation, we will

Take action to reduce environmental harms associated with the production and consumption of care

Recognise that our activities affect both demand for and supply of care in England

Prioritise activities that maximise direct patient benefit, while minimising avoidable demand for care and restricting the supply of unnecessary care

Further actions NICE should take

Within the next year, we should:

Include environmental sustainability as a consideration in topic selection and prioritisation

We should engage with relevant teams in NICE in the next 2 years on:

| Promotion of "do not offer" recommendations for care that imposes environmental costs but provides no benefits | Implementation support for guidance with a sustainability focus or co-benefit | Building on inhalers decision aid, include consideration of environmental sustainability in shared decision making situations, where possible |

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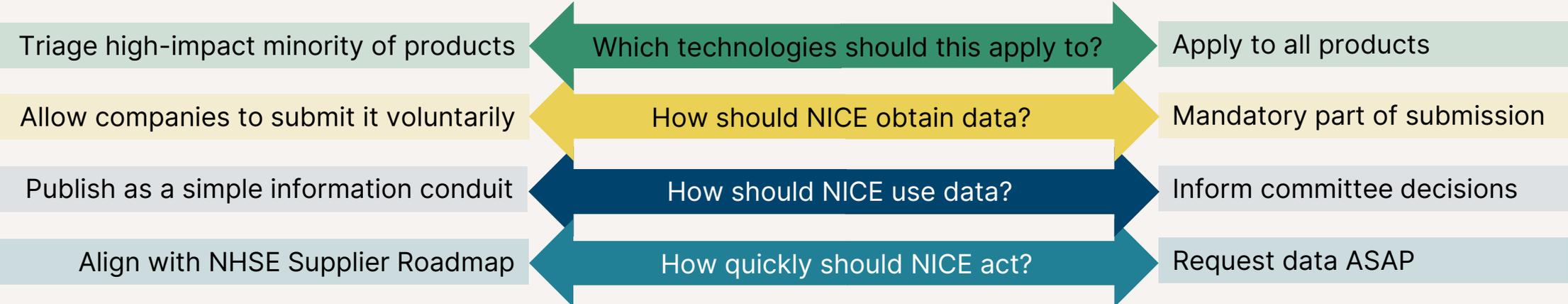
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NICE could collect environmental data

What data should we collect?

How and when should we get it?

What should we do with it?

High quality environmental impact data will provide the most opportunities, but would also impose a burden on NICE and wider system.

We will explore how we can get the right balance on how we might collect and use environmental impact data, engaging with stakeholders to identify the benefits, risks and opportunity costs of all options along the following spectrums:

Triage high-impact minority of products	Which technologies should this apply to?	Apply to all products
Allow companies to submit it voluntarily	How should NICE obtain data?	Mandatory part of submission
Publish as a simple information conduit	How should NICE use data?	Inform committee decisions
Align with NHSE Supplier Roadmap	How quickly should NICE act?	Request data ASAP

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Further actions NICE could take

Undertake methods development work and build technical knowledge and capacity, to prepare for future updating of methods to account for environmental impact

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Summary

The NICE Listens environmental sustainability project was a success. The programme is now well established as a means of understanding societal views, which is critical in addressing our organisational priority to focus on what matters most.

The findings reinforce our prior and ongoing thinking on how NICE should approach environmental sustainability.

Many aspects of sustainable healthcare do not involve trade-offs between clinical, economic and environmental outcomes. We should target 'win-win' areas where outcomes are aligned, and recognise where NICE core work already has positive impacts on environmental sustainability.

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Questions for the Board

Does the Board understand and accept the findings of the NICE Listens environmental sustainability project?

Is the Board content for us to proceed with the actions that we've proposed that NICE will and should do within the next 1-2 years?

- Producing an evidence summary on desflurane

- Making a targeted update to the NICE Principles

- Including environmental sustainability as a consideration in topic selection and prioritisation

- Engaging relevant teams to progress other actions with sustainability benefits or co-benefits

Does the Board agree that further scoping work on options for collecting and using environmental data is required before NICE commits to updating its methods to account for environmental impact?

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