

**INVESTORS
IN THE
ENVIRONMENT**



ACCREDITATION REPORT

George Veterinary Group

December 2023



Executive Summary

George Veterinary Group (GVG) has continued to embed sustainability as a core value within its operations and this commitment has been well evidenced throughout its audit pack. The Green Champions should be commended for their enthusiasm and dedication to improving GVG's sustainability credentials. The practice's work on waste management, procurement and projects are particular highlights. GVG has widened the scope of its impact that it addresses by engaging wider stakeholders, including by incentivising suppliers to improve the sustainability of their packaging, and engaging with farmers on insecticide replacements. Whilst the Green Champions did highlight a decline in engagement from staff members this year, measures have been put in place to address this issue, including improving the aesthetic appeal of communications and communication training.

Due to some data issues in previous years, the practice has reaccredited at Silver, however, should now look to work towards Green Level Accreditation by implementing reductions in resource consumption, including all transport within its carbon footprint, and applying the actions suggested within this report. The decarbonisation of transport should be a priority focus for the upcoming year as this will have significant impact on GVG's emission profile: fleet and grey fleet travel are responsible for over half of the practice's emissions.

Highlights

- The team at GVG has continued to develop and improve the practice's Environmental Management System (EMS).
- A sustainable procurement policy has been developed and implemented.
- The data collection and monitoring process has been improved, with the role of Resource Manager created to implement this.
- GVG undertook multiple projects with significant impact for Silver Accreditation which fulfilled all three of project categories.

Improvements

- Try to obtain accurate water data from water meters.
- Target the decarbonisation of transport via the introduction of electric vehicles (EV) and installation of EV charging points.
- Consider developing a specific carbon reduction goal in line with the UK's Net Zero ambition, and a roadmap to support its achievement.
- Continue to work on improving staff engagement.

KEY RESULTS

Carbon Footprint



Electricity Use



Gas Use



Water Use



Isoflurane



Mileage



*these results show changes in normalised resource usage and the carbon footprint from 2021 to 2022. Datasets run July to June.

Score

Investors in the Environment is pleased to confirm that, having recently completed the audit process, George Veterinary Group has achieved the Silver Level Accreditation with a score of 80%.



GVG has achieved Silver Level certification as the practice has evidenced the continued development and implementation of its EMS. This includes developing/reviewing and implementing: an Environmental Policy, a Procurement Policy, Action Plans, a Waste Management Plan, a Travel Plan and a Travel Survey. The practice has monitored electricity, gas, water, isoflurane, general waste, recycling, clinical waste, paper, and fleet mileage, and a Carbon Footprint has been calculated for 2022. Further, GVG engaged with a range of projects that promoted resource efficiency, biodiversity and staff wellbeing.

About the audit

The Investors in the Environment (iiE) accreditation requires an organisation to provide evidence that it has met a range of pre-defined criteria, set targets to reduce its environmental impact and taken action to improve its performance whilst enhancing the community in which it operates. Evidence is presented at an annual audit and this report provides an evaluation of the organisation's performance as well as offers advice on the next steps for continued improvement.

The Investors in the Environment annual audit assesses five key areas of an organisation's Environmental Management System (EMS). These areas include:

- Environmental policy
- Resource management and monitoring
- Progress against targets
- Action planning including social/ environmental projects
- Communication

The purpose of the audit is to evaluate the organisation's EMS and make suggestions relating to its performance. Future opportunities and risks to the organisation's environmental practices may also be identified as a result.

The audit consisted of an examination of documentation evidence, and an interview with key personnel on 6th December 2023.

Evidence submitted included:

- Signed Environmental Policy
- Sustainable Procurement Policy
- Resource Explanation Document
- Action Plans
- Travel Plan and Travel Questionnaire Responses
- Waste Management Plan and Audit Findings
- Annual Sustainability Report
- iiE Carbon Calculation
- Project and Communication Evidence

Summary Results Table

Audit category	Percentage
Section 1 - Leadership and Governance (Policy)	90%
Section 2 - Resource Use, Data, & Monitoring	93%
Section 3 - Performance, Action, & Targets	71%
Section 4 - Carbon Management	79%
Section 5 - Waste Management & Materials	88%
Section 6 – Transport & Travel Planning	89%
Section 7 - Environmental & Social Projects	100%
Section 8 – Communication & Engagement	83%
Overall Score	80%

Audit Scoring

Each section of the organisation's Environmental Management System (EMS) is scored as detailed below. Full reference to scoring can be found separately in the organisation's audit sheet upon request, including auditor comments against specific criteria.

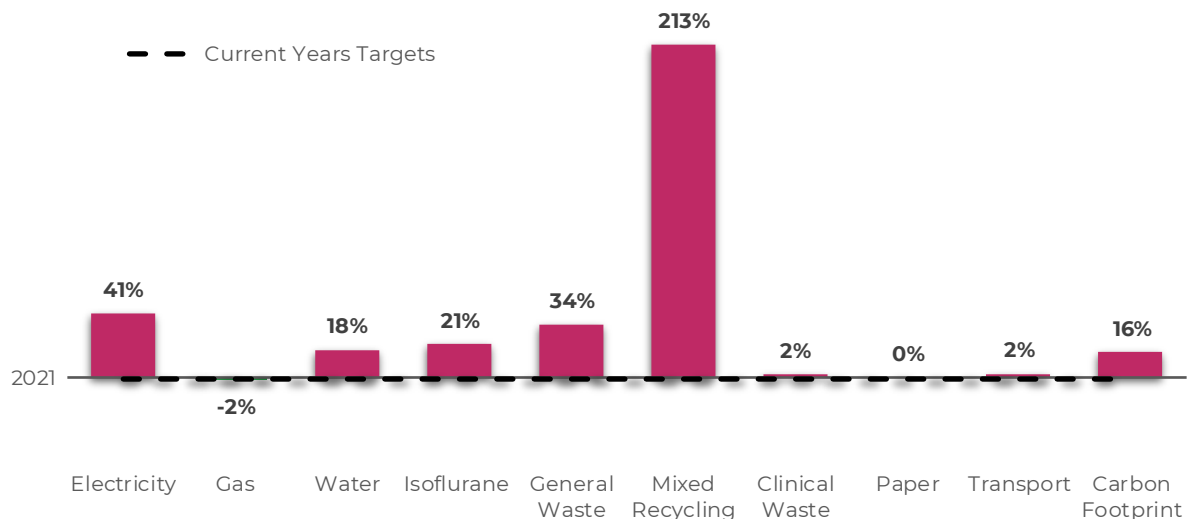
Fail	<p>0 Points: A failing score means that this criterion has not been met nor is any progress demonstrated.</p> <p><i>No progress or commitment has been made in this area.</i></p>
Action Needed	<p>1 point: Action is needed to improve and should be considered in alignment with the auditor's comments and an appropriate timeline. These will be discussed during quarterly support calls to help improve.</p> <p><i>The organisation is considering developing this area, but no formal process has been established or meaningful progress has not been made.</i></p>
Pass / Compliant	<p>2 points: The criteria have been met, though there may also be suggestions to improve.</p> <p><i>The organisation is beginning or improving this area, is broadly compliant with the iiE criteria, and may be showing processes that support improvements.</i></p>
Outstanding	<p>3 points: This criterion has been exceeded as measured against the basic iiE criteria and may demonstrate a significant improvement since the previous year or may highlight best practice.</p> <p><i>The organisation is succeeding with supportive target achievement and may be leading or supporting others in their sector or influence to achieve improvements.</i></p>

Performance graphs

Year on year performance

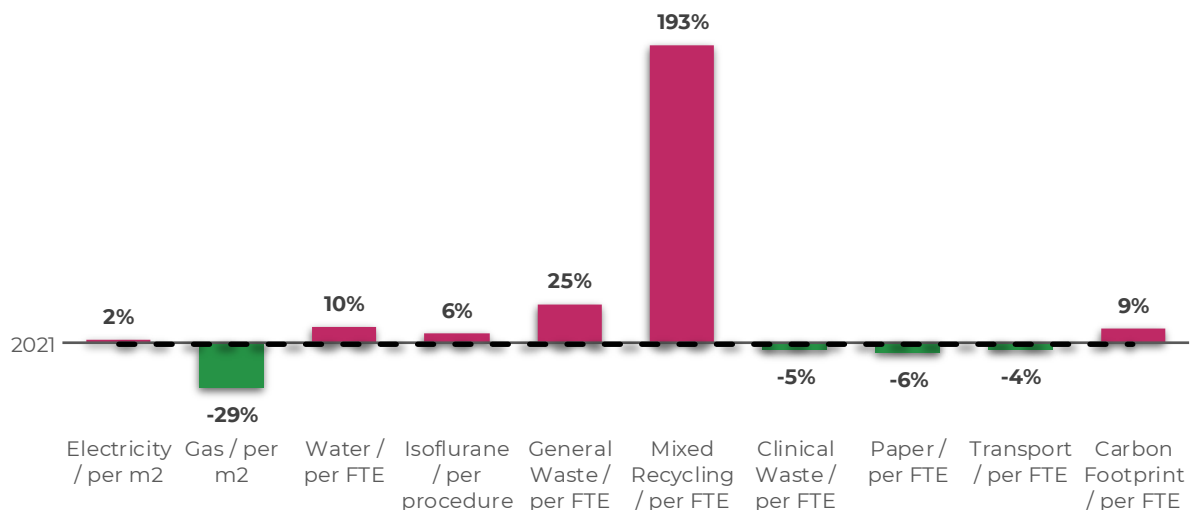
This graph shows GVG's annual performance for 2022 against 2021 values. The bars represent the percentage change in annual resource usage from 2021's values; green bars represent a reduction and pink bars represent an increase. GVG's -1% reduction target is represented by a black dashed line; as discussed with the Green Champions, in the future these targets will be updated to -2% in line with iIE's minimum requirements.

Note, datasets run from July to June and, due to improvements in data collection methods, datasets are not fully comparable.



Normalised year on year performance

This graph shows normalised data for GVG's annual performance for 2022 against 2021 values. Electricity and gas are normalised by the practice's square footage. Isoflurane is normalised by procedure numbers. All other data is normalised by FTE. The bars represent the percentage change in normalised annual resource usage from 2021's values; green bars represent a reduction and pink bars represent an increase. GVG's -1% reduction target is represented by a black dashed line.

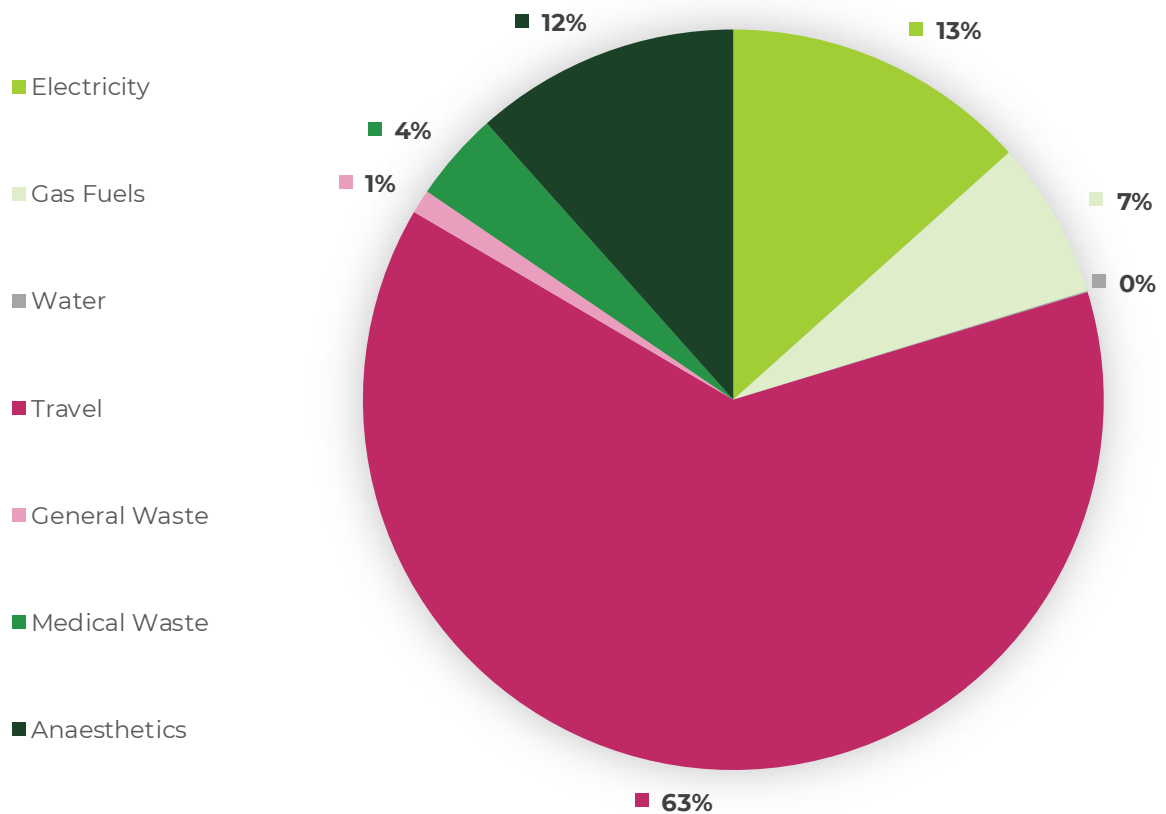


Carbon footprint

Total Carbon Footprint for 2022 = 311.12 tCO₂e

This carbon footprint is based on annual resource usage data from July 2022 to June 2023 for electricity, gas, water, fleet mileage, grey fleet mileage, general waste, recycling, food waste, clinical waste, and isoflurane are all accounted for. Refrigerant F-gases have been monitored, however as no leakages have been detected these are not represented within the carbon footprint. The percentage contribution of water usage to the total carbon footprint is less than 1% (0.17%) and so appears as 0% in the figure.

2022



Next steps

To continue to develop sustainability within the organisation and work towards Green, the business should consider the following next steps below.

Leadership & Governance (Environmental Policy)



90%

GVG has reviewed and implemented an Environmental Policy, updating its commitments to ensure these remain relevant to its operations. The support of senior management for this policy and sustainability is evident, and the policy has been made available to staff, clients and wider stakeholders to ensure the practice remains accountable and transparent in its operations.

Strengths

- The Green Team, and their sustainability work, receive good support from senior management: the director representative of the Green Group is GVG's practice manager.
- The commitments detailed within the policy are comprehensive and clear, targeting the practice's direct impacts, as well as its wider sphere of influence via engagement with supplier and third parties.
- A good sustainable Procurement Policy has been developed and implemented to support the commitments made within the Environmental Policy around waste reduction and operational efficiency.
- The role of Resource Manager has been created within GVG's operations department. One of the key responsibilities of this role is to ensure that the practice remains compliant with all relevant environmental legislation.
- Sustainability is incorporated into inductions for new staff and, to some extent, staff appraisals. Further, the practice provides carbon literacy training for interested staff members.
- The Green Champions have demonstrated an excellent level of commitment to developing their own understanding of sustainability and how to implement this within the practice, attending webinars and CPD training.

Actions for review

- Update the environmental aspects listed within the Environmental Policy to include a specific reference to the practice's usage/prescription of pharmaceutical products. Consider also including a reference to the practice's capacity for wider influence, such as its Scope 3 emissions and supplier/client engagement.
- As GVG already provides sustainability training when staff express interest, consider formalising this as a commitment within the Environmental Policy. The iiE Green Champion course may be of interest when looking to upskill staff members on sustainability. GVG has one free space on the Green Champion course included within its membership: to sign someone up for this, contact training@iie.uk.com.
- Consider developing a specific emission reduction target to work towards, e.g. a timeframe in which to halve GVG's emission profile.
- To support and evidence legal compliance, consider compiling a legal register that captures all relevant environmental legislation.

Resource Use & Data Monitoring



93%

Baseline datasets (running July 2019 – June 2020), and those for following years, have been developed for electricity, gas, water, isoflurane, general waste, recycling, clinical waste, paper, and fleet mileage across all sites. The usage of each resource and data collection method has been described within the resource explanation document.

Strengths

- A resource review document is in place that contains a detailed explanation of the usage and management of all resources, and evidences strong understanding of resource usage throughout the organisation.
- Data is collected monthly for all nominated resources, and utility data is collected directly from meter reads (with the exception of water due to meter access issues): this is outstanding at Silver.
- A half yearly data review is in place with outcomes informing action development and management. A good process has been developed for this that supports performance analysis and allows identification of issues with resource usage.
- The Green Champions report that the introduction of the Resource Manager role has greatly improved the data collection process, and has resulted in more accurate and comparable datasets for 2022 than for previous years.

Actions for review

- Look to establish the location of all water meters to allow more accurate and frequent data collection and prevent reliance on bills.
- Consider compiling an asset list that references the relative usage/power usage of equipment, efficiency rating and its management. This could be colour coded to identify whether equipment is always plugged in or only plugged in when in use. This is a useful tool for identifying unnecessary electrical usage.
- Consider rebaselining using 2022's data: the current baseline year will have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and so is unlikely to be truly representative of standard operations for the practice. Further, the practice's data collection methods have improved for 2022, so prior datasets are not directly comparable.
- Continue to install smart meters where appropriate, to help improve the efficiency of data collection across multi-meter sites. Further, where smart meters have been installed, it may be beneficial to collect half-hourly data. Half-hourly smart meter data can be used to create heat maps, allowing visualisation of average utility usage over a 24-hour or weekly period. Such graphs provide strong visual aids for identifying background inefficiencies and can help you to understand the minimum daily energy thresholds needed.
- As discussed at audit, aim to increase the frequency of data reviews to quarterly to improve action impact analysis and ensure that, where resource data is off target, this is identified quickly.

Performance, Action & Targets



71%

Data has been periodically reviewed, with the insights used to understand performance and inform action planning. However, issues with data from prior years has prevented accurate evaluation of progress against targets. Action Plans have been developed, with actions targeted at each resource and other areas. Future reduction targets have been set for all nominated resources and the Carbon Footprint.

Strengths

- Absolute reductions in gas usage have been achieved when comparing 2022 against 2021, largely due to actions targeting improved thermal efficiency, and boiler upgrades.
- When datasets are normalised by FTE, reductions are seen in clinical waste, paper usage and transport (miles) for 2022 against 2021. This is a good indicator of actions positively impacting efficiency, however absolute reductions should still be targeted for all resources.
- Whilst formal targets aren't yet in line with iiE's requirements, the audit pack evidences evaluation of performance and provides analysis of the potential barriers to, and actions that support, achievement of future reduction.
- Action plans are in place for: resource use, transport, waste, additional projects, biodiversity and green spaces and communication. These are clear and well organised, with completed actions removed and captured within the EMS. Further, progress through action plans has been demonstrated; in particular, a good number of actions have been implemented that target management of anaesthetic gas and heating efficiency/gas usage.

Actions for review

- As discussed at audit, change the intensity metric used for the normalisation of the transport mileage data from FTE to fuel consumption. This will provide a useful metric for evaluating the impact of telematics and driving efficiency education on fleet fuel efficiency.
- To help reduce medical appliances being left on when not needed, consider introducing a red and green sticker system. Equipment that needs to be left on has a red sticker whilst those that can be switched off have a green sticker.
- In line with iiE requirements, reduction targets must be set at a minimum of -2% annually: update GVG's future targets in order to remain compliant.
- To assist Action Plan management across sites and teams, consider utilising a free project management software, such as [Trello](#).
- Consider separating out the resource use Action Plan, or colour coding it by resource, to help visualise target areas and understand action distribution.

Carbon Management



79%

GVG's annual resource data has been used to complete a Carbon Footprint calculation for 2022, with the total carbon emissions calculated to be 311.12 tCO₂e and travel identified as GVG's key emission contributor. This data provides a good guide for visualising key emission sources, targeting actions and evaluating future performance. It is important to note that the carbon footprint has increased from the previous year, however the current footprint includes resource data from a new building not included previously.

Strengths

- GVG has signed up for a 100% renewable energy contract.
- The carbon footprint includes all Scope 1 and 2 emissions and some Scope 3 emissions: electricity, gas, water, fleet mileage, grey fleet mileage, general waste, recycling, food waste, clinical waste, isoflurane and other F-gases are all accounted for.
- The practice provides carbon literacy training for interested staff members.

Actions for review

- As travel is GVG's primary emission source, comprising 63% of total emissions, prioritise fleet and grey fleet decarbonisation.
- To work towards Green Level Accreditation, capture emissions associated with public transport and flights within the carbon footprint and continue to map significant Scope 3 emissions within GVG's value chain.
- Consider developing a specific carbon reduction goal in line with the UK's Net Zero ambition, and a roadmap to support its achievement. iiE's recent [Net Zero](#) webinar is a good resource when looking at this. iiE also offer the [JEMA Pathways to Net Zero](#) training which may be beneficial for key staff members involved in carbon reduction planning.
- As GVG now looks to work towards Green Level Accreditation, continue to encourage staff to reflect on their own carbon footprints. Consider sharing the [Giki Net Zero](#) app with staff to help build engagement with the practice's own carbon reduction goals.

Waste Management & Materials



88%

A Waste Management Plan, specific to GVG's outputs and in line with the principles of the waste hierarchy, has been developed and put into action. This has been communicated to staff and measures have been put in place to ensure compliance with waste segregation and to reduce waste outputs where possible.

Strengths

- An explanation of waste management is included within the resource explanation document. This covers general, recycling, and clinical waste, and demonstrates a good understanding of how waste is managed within the practice and measures that can be put in place to reduce waste outputs.
- GVG has evidenced a strong focus on sustainable procurement and on waste prevention through informed purchasing habits. A procurement policy has been implemented and the practice has been working with suppliers to disincentivise their use of excess/plastic/unrecyclable packaging. GVG use reusable textiles such as washable scrubs, where infection risk allows.
- The Green Champions report that staff are engaged with waste management and supportive of actions targeting waste reduction and recycling.
- Half yearly waste audits occur, with outcomes recorded, used to inform action planning, and communicated to staff within the newsletter

Actions for review

- Clarify whether waste enters landfill or is diverted to energy from waste and capture this within the EMS. If waste does enter landfill, consider switching waste contractor to one that offers energy from waste: this treatment option involves the generation of energy from waste that would otherwise enter landfill and has a lower associated environmental impact.
- Measures have been put in place to reduce waste but the impact of these cannot be assessed as the previous year's data is inaccurate. Look to monitor data closely and achieve reductions in the upcoming year.
- Consider developing a traffic light/points-based system to support the procurement policy. These systems can be used to apply a sustainability rating to potential procurement options and so aid decision making.
- Consider asking suppliers to complete a supplier questionnaire to help establish their sustainability credentials. This could ask questions around their environmental goals/policy, an EMS in place, having accreditation/certification, using/supplying fair trade/organic products, using local suppliers, measuring, and reporting impact, and calculating carbon emissions including methodology and setting targets.
- Continue to work with the small animal team to encourage the use of reusable incontinence pads.

Transport & Travel Planning



89%

GVG has developed a Travel Plan that identifies the practice's travel requirements, outlines how travel data is collected, details objectives for travel reduction and decarbonisation, and includes details of sustainable alternatives for travel to the practice. An annual survey on staff travel has been carried out, with the results analysed and used to inform action planning.

Strengths

- Travel is GVG's largest emission impactor, and the Green Champions are aware of this and are developing actions to target decarbonisation. The practice has made a commitment to fleet electrification, which is included within the procurement policy.
- The current, non-electric, fleet vehicles that are used have been chosen for their fuel efficiency.
- Staff have been provided with education of how to maximise efficiency when driving and webfleet telematics are used for efficient planning logistics, route choice and tracking driving efficiency.

Actions for review

- Following the responses to the travel survey, where possible look to install bike racks, provide access to shower facilities and run road safety bike training to encourage commuters to cycle to work. Consider also introducing the Cycle to Work scheme to help employees access bike equipment. Add these actions to the action plan for travel.
- In locations where private parking access is limited, consider working with local businesses/the council to install EV charging points. [Green Energy Switch](#), an [iiE partner](#), have started a new grant-funded programme offering free EV charger installations for businesses. Contact commercial@greenenergyswitch.co.uk for further information.
- To support staff in moving to EV vehicles, consider introducing an EV salary sacrifice scheme. It can also be beneficial to ask a staff member who already has experience driving an EV to run a short Q&A session to answer any questions or address any concerns that people may have about transitioning to an EV vehicle.
- Continue to encourage staff to car share.

Environmental & Social Projects



100%

GVG engaged with several projects within this audit cycle, exceeding the minimum of two required for Silver Level Accreditation. GVG will need to engage with three further projects for Green Accreditation.

Strengths

- GVG undertook multiple projects with significant impact for Silver Accreditation. These projects fulfilled all three project categories: resource efficiency, biodiversity and social/community influence and education.
- The practice's biodiversity-focused projects have had particular impact, with significant efforts to reduce antibiotic and antiparasitic usage made via both direct action, and education. The impact of this has been captured through antibiotic usage benchmarking.

Actions for review

- Consider adding an employee volunteer day to contracts, whereby staff can choose to take one day of the working year to volunteer.
- To capture the impact of GVG's biodiversity focused projects, follow on from the iNaturalist app, and further engage staff, consider taking part in citizen science projects such as [PoMS](#) (the UK pollinator monitoring scheme) or other projects that monitor [butterflies](#), [seasonal change across species](#) and [mammals](#).

Communication & Engagement



83%

GVG has evidenced communication between the Green Team, Senior Management, staff and wider stakeholders via the website, an annual sustainability report, emails, meetings, staff updates, posters/signage, and a quarterly newsletter.

Strengths

- Following a decline in staff engagement, the Green Champions have revamped communications to increase their aesthetic appeal and hopefully boost engagement. One of the Green Champions has also registered to undertake communications CPD to improve the Green Teams communication strategy.
- An annual sustainability report has been developed and shared on the practice website. This report has received a positive response from the directors.
- GVG is looking to have an impact beyond the practice, by engaging with clients, suppliers and other industry members.

Actions for review

- Continue to use gamification to engage staff. This could be in the form of a sustainability competition between different teams (i.e. pig, horse etc), or the reintroduction of the driving league table.
- Consider highlighting a monthly or quarterly 'green hero' as a further incentive for staff to engage.
- When recruiting new Green Team members and allocating responsibility for specific areas, e.g. resource champion, consider providing a short role description, and enrolling the staff member in the iiE Green Champion course. This should help staff feel they receive adequate training for the role and invest them as they have dedicated time to training. It could also be beneficial to specify a time period for the training to occur in.

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