Are We Sustainable? 4CPS-231
A baseline questionnaire to GHP members regarding pharmacy practice across the UK

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Background
We you, me, and all our patients are on course for a global temperature rise which will see millions of people displaced, injured or dying through rising sea levels, starvation and disease by the end of this century. The head of the UK environment agency has warned that in less than years, by 2035, water shortages in the UK will pose a threat to life. The health costs are projected to be extraordinary. The NHS is the largest public sector contributor to carbon emissions (25% pre COVID) which is 5.4% of total UK emissions. Pharmacy as a department, as well as medicines and medicinal products, create waste and pollution. The COVID pandemic and the relentless consumption of PPE has escalated this issue. We must strive towards reducing waste, and ultimately pollution, in order to increase sustainability both for our patients, and for global health. Ahead of COP26 in Glasgow this year, the Guild of Healthcare Pharmacists (GHP) were keen to discover our members views on Sustainability, and our role in the future.

Method
In July 2021, we invited all GHP members (n=4,788) to complete a short survey to gauge their understanding of the role of pharmacy in the promotion of a sustainable approach to healthcare. All members in the UK were emailed a link to a ten item survey in Webropol® and invited to complete this by the end of August 2021. The results were analysed using descriptive statistics. Free text comments were analysed using thematic analysis. No completion incentives were offered. Ethical approval was not required for this study.

Results and discussion
Seventy-nine percent (n=85) respondents added their suggestions to the question “What changes would improve sustainability in Pharmacy?” (Figure 2) including national leadership, recycling schemes for e.g. inhalers and PPE, as well as a review of work and travel policies. A local champion in your department was also a common suggestion. Sixty-five percent of respondents provided suggestions on how the proposed changes could be measured (Figure 3), such as measuring the carbon footprint of your organisation, creating energy and waste logs etc.

Despite 94% of respondents believing that aspects of practice were wasteful, only 37% (n=39) felt empowered to make change in their organisation (Figure 4). Fifty-eight percent (54%) provided free text comments – key themes for those who did not feel empowered were: not holding the budget, lack of local or national leadership in this area (Figure 5).

When asked about whether they believed an increased focus on Sustainability was required from an Organisational or Management perspective, 90% (n=96) believed that this was necessary in their organisation (Figure 6). Key themes from the 97 comments on this questions included conflicting views on funding – some believed it would save money, others that it would require investment, a need for National guidance. Respondents also believed that leadership was required at all levels of practice to make change happen (Figure 7).

Conclusions and next steps
Survey respondents believe that aspects of pharmacy practice are not Sustainable, however most do not feel empowered to make change. There is a need for National guidance to support changes in practice, and for local champions and leadership at all levels to ensure that Sustainability can be Sustainable. Since this survey was completed, the GHP have appointed a Chair and Vice Chair for Sustainability. We will work with colleagues across the UK, Europe and globally to improve practice in pharmacy and medicines use.

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