



NHS

Northern Care Alliance

NHS Foundation Trust

NHS SUSTAINABILITY • CASE STUDY

Over **60%** of this £1.8bn NHS Trust's emissions were a **blind spot.**

— here's how they mapped it, supplier
by supplier, with **GreenInsight AI.**

Supply chain ≈ 62% of the NHS carbon footprint (NHS England).

Read the data-led playbook behind the numbers:

Unlock the full case study

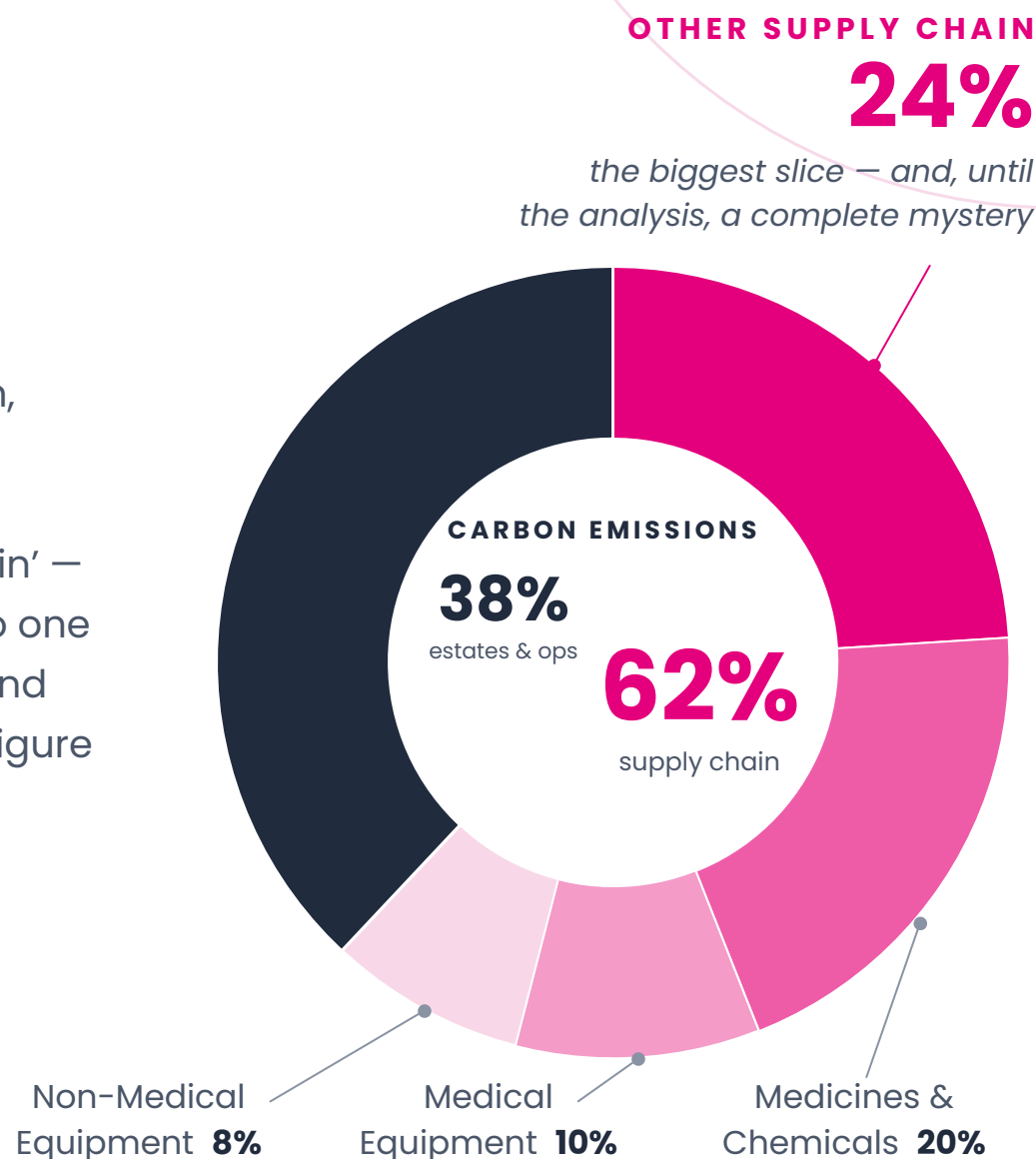
THE CHALLENGE

A £1.8bn Trust with a carbon blind spot

The Northern Care Alliance serves 1.6 million people across Salford, Oldham, Bury and Rochdale. Under the NHS Green Plan, Group Head of Sustainability Heidi Barnard set out to move it towards carbon neutral. Estates and energy were well understood — but supply chain drives 62% of the NCA's carbon, and its biggest slice was a complete blank.

That slice — labelled only 'Other Supply Chain' — was the footprint's single largest part, yet no one knew what sat inside it. The carbon and spend behind it went untracked, and NCA had no figure for its total emissions.

Upon having their data analysed by GreenInsight, the first priority was finding out what was inside.



NHS carbon footprint model. Source: NHS England.

1.6m

people served

20,000+

staff

£1.8b

turnover

6,000+ t

waste per year

THE DISCOVERY

Hiding inside 'Other': £1.3m of facemasks

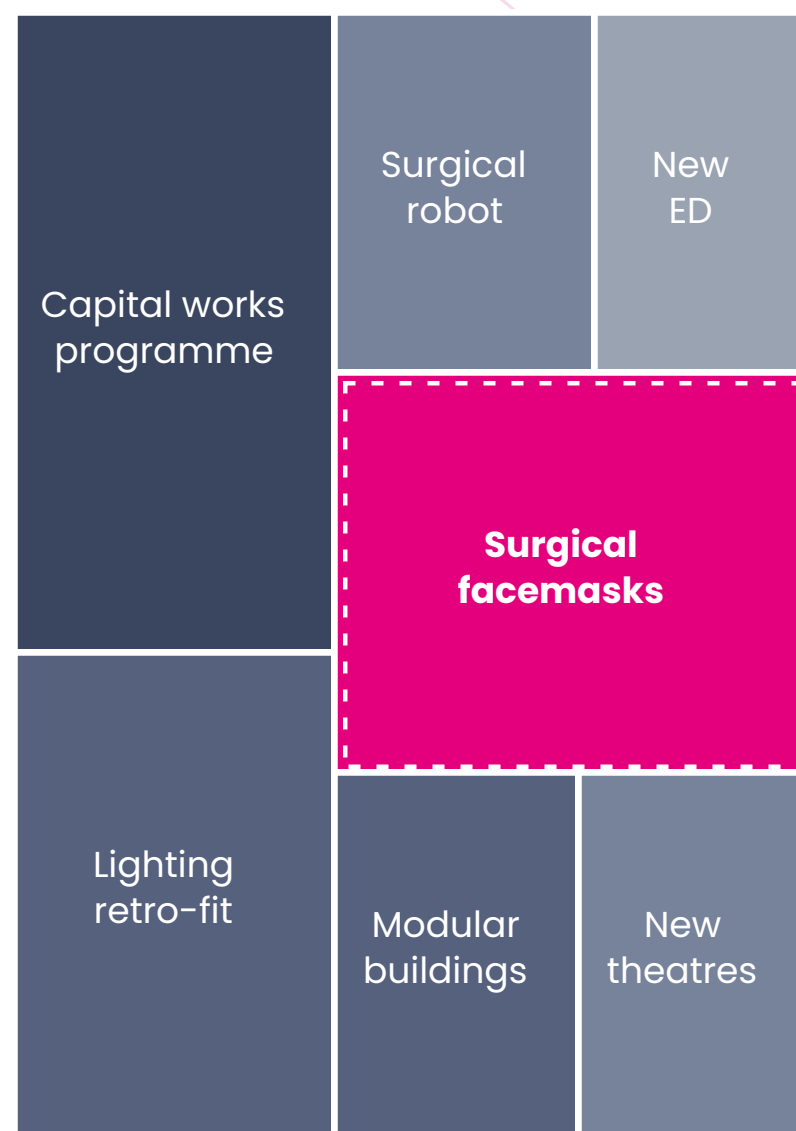
Drilling into the mystery slice revealed a mix nobody had seen in one place: capital works, new theatres, a surgical robot — and one tile that shouldn't have been there at all. During the pandemic the Trust qualified for free push-stock PPE, yet it was buying surgical facemasks — over £1.3m of them. The fix was immediate: switch to the free national stock.

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When I showed my COO how much we were spending on facemasks... her jaw hit the floor. It lit a fire beneath her and everything got moving. That, for me, paid for the data and the analysis by itself.

— Heidi Barnard, Group Head of Sustainability

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'Other Supply Chain' drill-down, simplified.
Tiles sized by spend.

THE BASELINE

From no number at all to 291,665 tonnes

£807m

spend analysed

3,905

suppliers

291,665 t

CO₂e baseline

0.361

kg CO₂e per £

The first GreenInsight analysis turned £807m of accounts-payable data into the Trust's first full carbon baseline. Benchmarked against peers, NCA sat almost exactly on the trend line — neither laggard nor leader. For the first time, the Trust knew where it stood.

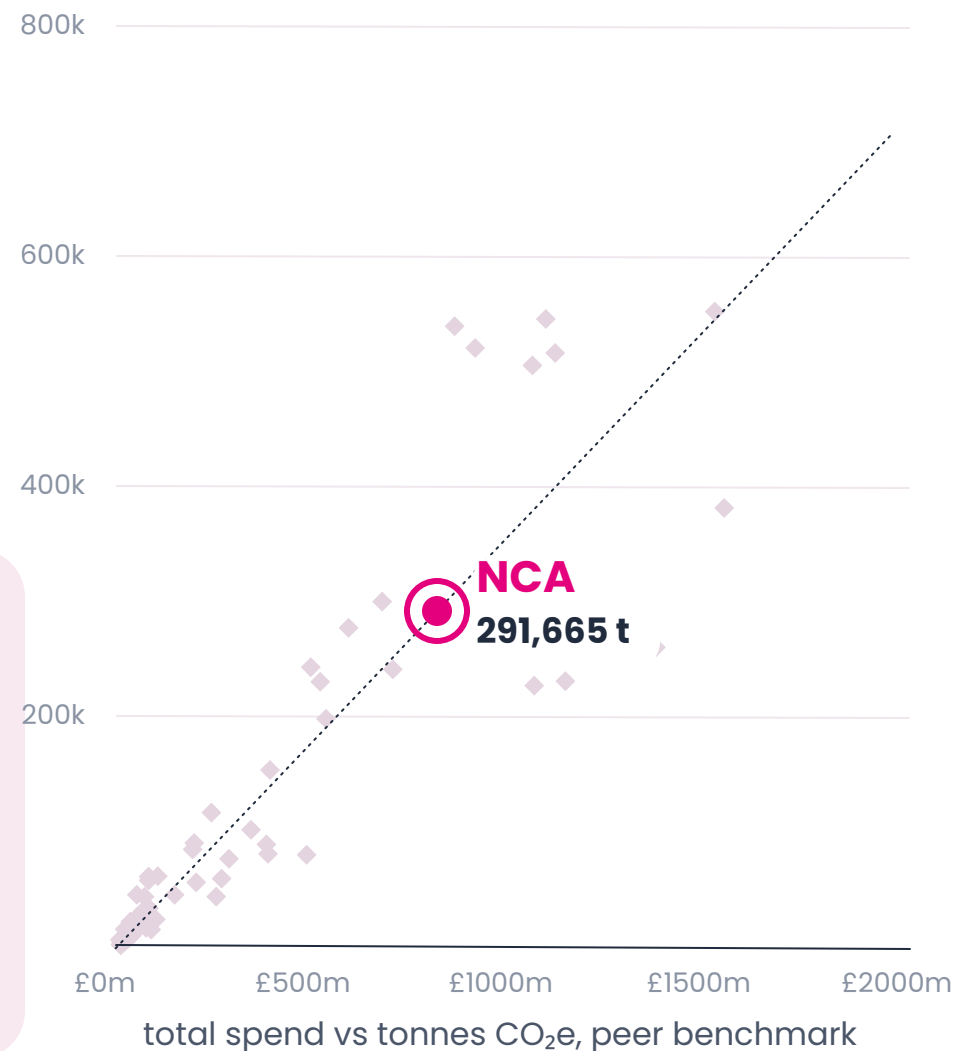
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From day one, even the basic overview was useful – it allowed me to see the situation in black and white... roughly middle of the road.

— Heidi Barnard, Group Head of Sustainability

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Illustrative recreation of the benchmark



THE KEY NUMBER

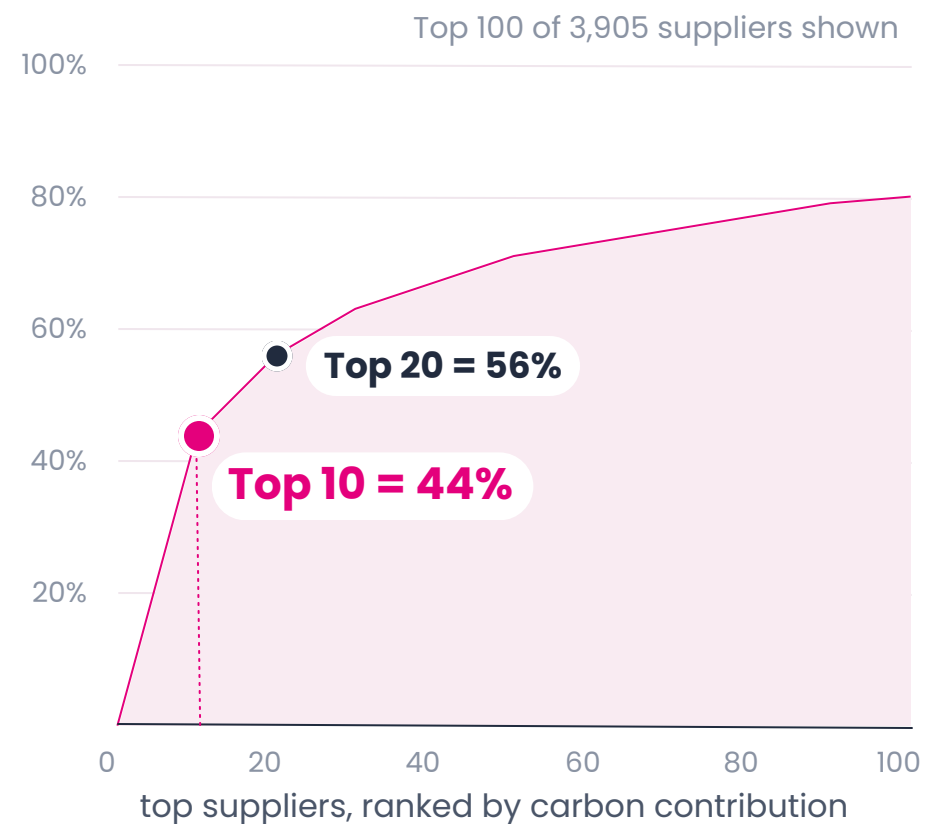
44% of the carbon sat with just 10 suppliers

GreenInsight ranked all 3,905 of the Trust's suppliers by spend and carbon. The curve told a story procurement could finally act on: the top 10 suppliers accounted for 44% of supply-chain carbon — the top 20, more than half. Instead of a 3,905-supplier problem, Heidi had a top-ten conversation.



If I say to my procurement colleagues – we need to talk about our suppliers, they will run a mile. So, I will only ever talk in terms of top ten... if I can tackle our top ten in the first 3 years, I'm 44% of the way there.

— Heidi Barnard, Group Head of Sustainability



THE ACTION PLAN

Three lists procurement could act on

Heidi broke the Scope 3 problem into three lists procurement could actually run with — products, services, suppliers. She had a good level of control and understanding of products, and was confident to tackle them.

As to services and suppliers, they took on a “people first” approach to services, working with the people who knew them best, and focused on strategies that helped leverage the weight of the NHS as a whole in order to wrangle their suppliers.

Services to understand4▶

Focus on the people: engaging with clinical leads service-by-service

- ENF Directors · department leads · renal clinicians · imaging

Suppliers to engage3▶

Borrow NHS-wide leverage, work regionals directly, engage unique suppliers at exec level.

- National · Regional · Trust-unique

Products to tackle5▼		
Product	Spend	Intensity
Printing	£1.21m	0.53
Facemasks	£1.35m	0.38
PPE (other)	£0.60m	0.34
Linen	£1.11m	0.32
Gloves	£0.07m	0.32
Carbon intensity — kg CO ₂ e per £ spent. Red = highest priority.		

EARLY RESULTS

Quick wins bought the momentum

Printing was an early win: the Trust had switched to digital communications, yet tonnes of letters were still being printed and posted – at the worst carbon intensity on the products list. Stopping that delivered immediate savings, meanwhile the early facemask fix paid for the analysis outright. Other findings took more time and effort: linen was vanishing into clinical waste rather than being laundered and re-used, and the MRI estate kept growing unannounced.

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I have had porters camped out in the waste holds, overnight, watching bags to find out who on earth – and why on earth – is putting linen in wastebags.

— Heidi Barnard

”

“

They seem to breed MRI machines. Every time I turn up on site, there seem to be three more that have popped up out of nowhere.

— Heidi Barnard

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Why quick wins mattered

Visible early savings won the backing of the executive team – the mandate Heidi needed to start the slower, larger work with procurement and the top-ten suppliers.

THE SUPPLIER MAP

Influence, sized supplier by supplier

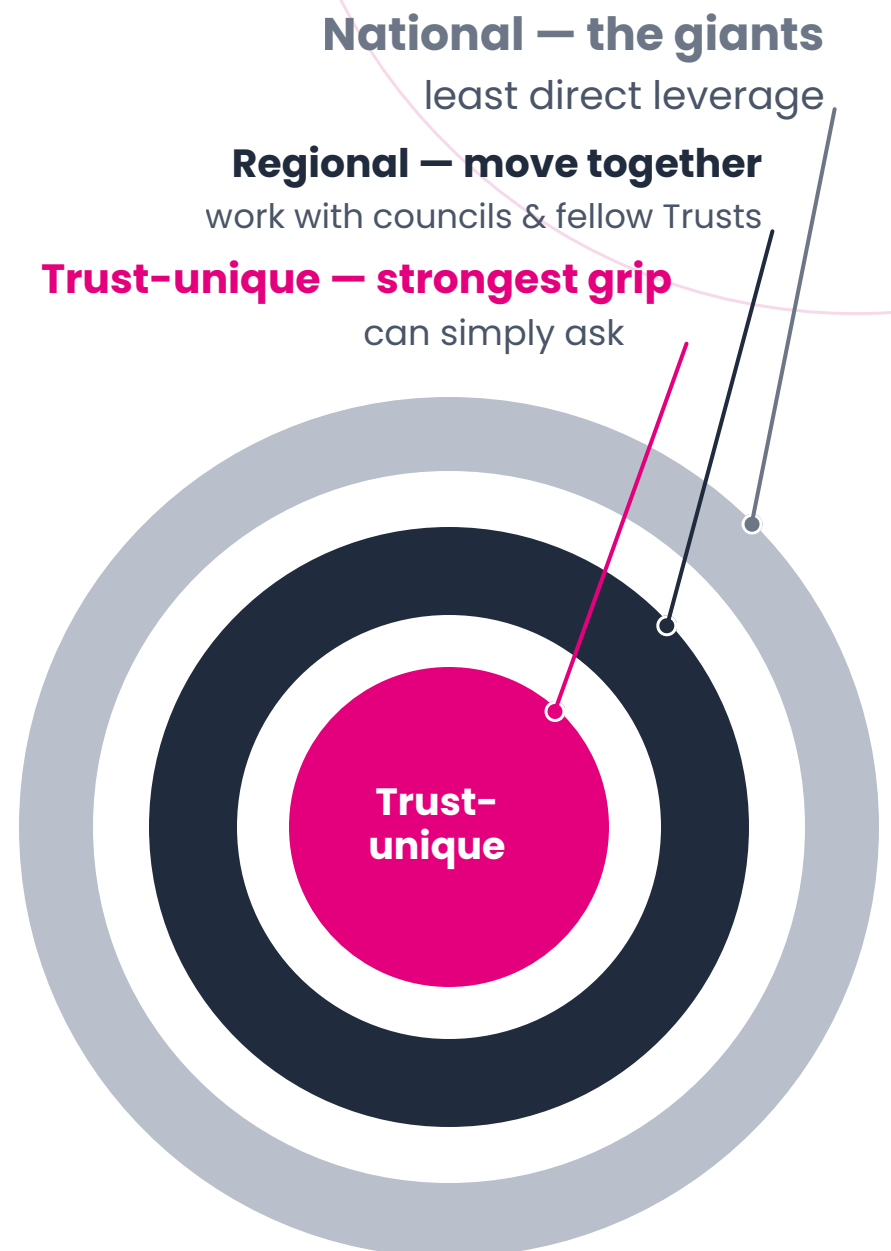
Not every supplier can be moved the same way, so Heidi matched approach to size. Trust-unique suppliers were the easiest: NCA is one of their largest customers, so simply asking is often all that's needed. Regional suppliers require a collective approach, working together with other Trusts — and here the data held a surprise: dozens of NCA's 'suppliers' were in fact other NHS Trusts, money circulating inside the system, and an opportunity for easy reductions.

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There must be 50 trusts on the list... do we understand what those flows of money look like, why they're happening, and do our net zero carbon plans take into account those services?

— Heidi Barnard, Group Head of Sustainability

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the giants →
next page

BORROWED LEVERAGE

Borrowing a bigger voice

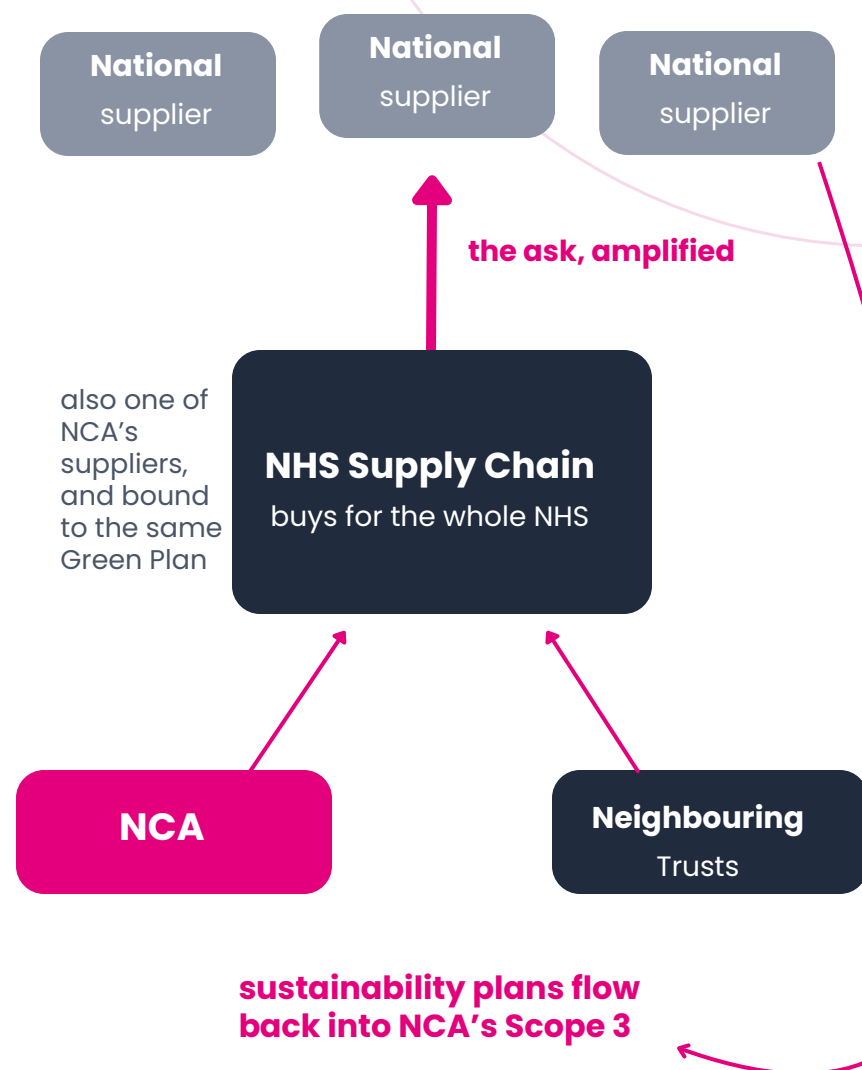
The national giants supply every trust in the country; against them, NCA's spend is a rounding error. But not the spend of NHS Supply Chain, the body that buys at national scale for the whole NHS. She joined up with Supply Chain and other Trusts to pressure the giants, pressing them into publishing sustainability plans she could build into her Scope 3. When a supplier cuts its emissions, NCA's footprint falls with it.

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Us going in and nipping at their ear won't be very effective, but if someone like NHS supply chain could go and do that, they have far more weight behind them.

— Heidi Barnard, Group Head of Sustainability

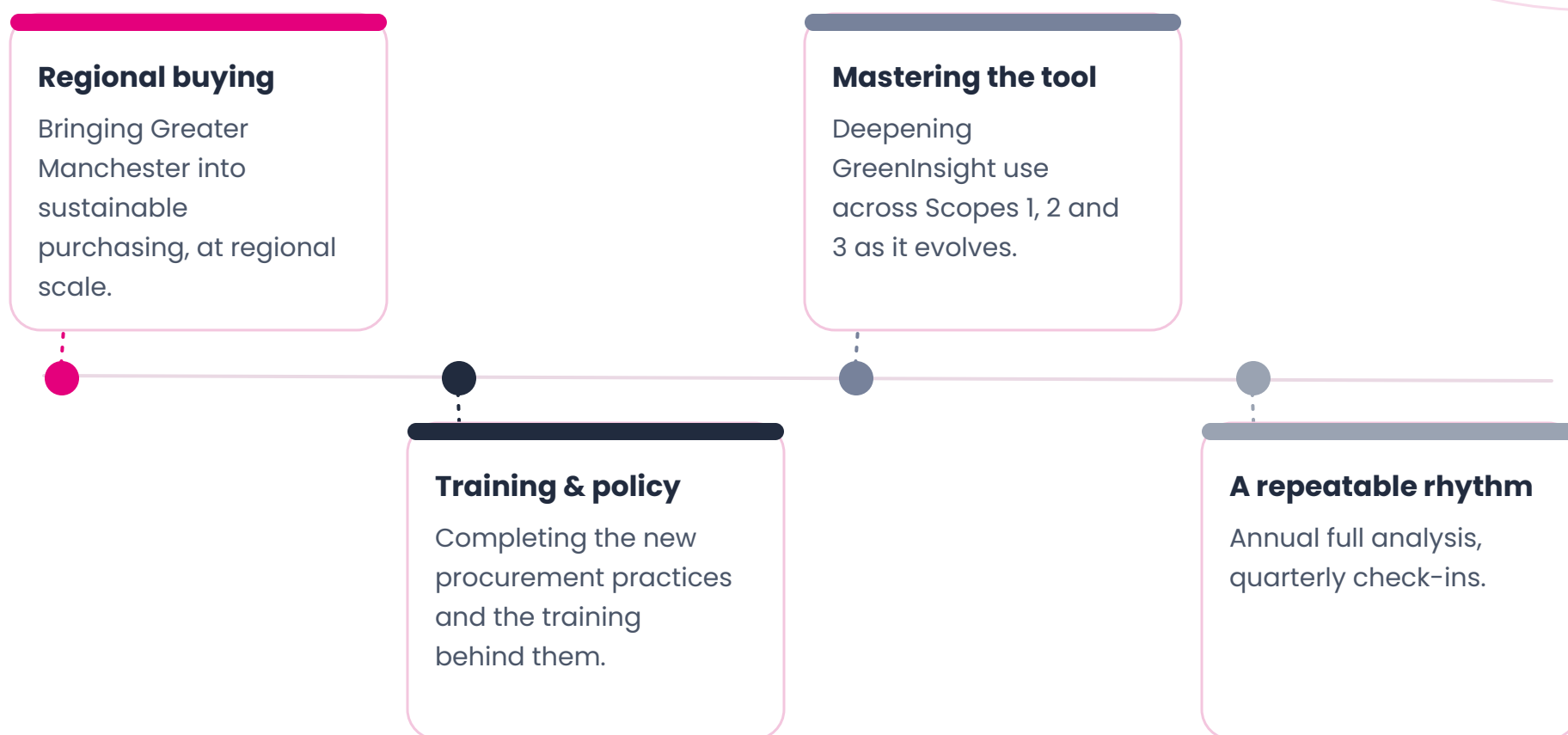
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WHAT'S NEXT

The plan beyond the plan

The first analysis was the hard one. From here the goal is repeatability and reach — the same visibility, wider and on a consistent basis.



Every step feeds the same loop: better data → stronger asks → a smaller Scope 3.

ABOUT CO2ANALYSIS

Data specialists for the journey to Net Zero

We are data specialists with a long background in supply chain and carbon analysis, supporting public and private sector organisations in measuring and reducing their carbon footprint. GreenInsight AI turns the data you already have into a carbon baseline, a supplier-level breakdown and an action plan your teams can use.

200+

clients
supported

567M

tonnes CO₂e
analysed

2.5M

shared suppliers

\$2.5T

customer spend
analysed

See what GreenInsight finds in your supply chain.

co2analysis.com