

CASE STUDY: Clinical Partners

FROM COMPLIANCE TO COMPETITIVE EDGE: HOW CLINICAL PARTNERS TURNED A CARBON REDUCTION PLAN INTO A STRATEGY FOR GROWTH

For SMEs supplying the NHS, a Carbon Reduction Plan (CRP) isn't just a requirement. It's the key to winning contracts, building resilience, and leading with impact.

"Profit Impact took us on the journey at our pace and delivered results. They filled the expertise gap and created real momentum"

Introduction

Clinical Partners is one of the UK's leading independent providers of mental health, autism, and ADHD services. With over 300 staff across 22 clinics, they work both privately and in partnership with the NHS, delivering care that meets NICE standards and makes a tangible difference to people's lives.

Like many SMEs supplying the NHS, they faced a new challenge: creating a compliant Carbon Reduction Plan (CRP) under PPN 06/21 (now PPN06). It's a requirement for winning and keeping NHS contracts, but it's rarely straightforward. Measuring emissions (especially Scope 3), setting credible reduction targets, securing board buy-in, meeting publication rules, and keeping everything updated year-on-year takes time, resources, and expertise.

For Clinical Partners, the stakes were clear. Without a strong CRP, they risked losing ground in a competitive NHS procurement environment. With one, they could strengthen their bid position, protect valuable contracts, and demonstrate their commitment to sustainability, just as they do to the care they provide.

Problem Identification

When Clinical Partners learned they would need a compliant Carbon Reduction Plan to qualify for an upcoming NHS tender, the clock was ticking. The deadline was fixed, and the requirements were precise, but the path to meeting them was not.

Like many SMEs, they were already running at full capacity. The leadership team recognised the importance of sustainability, but some staff members were concerned about the additional workload. Data on emissions, especially Scope 3, was patchy, and there was no clear system for collecting or verifying it. NHS Evergreen requirements added another layer of complexity, and it wasn't obvious how these connected to the CRP.

In a competitive tender environment, Clinical Partners had to assume they might be up against suppliers with stronger sustainability credentials. Without a robust, credible plan, they risked falling behind. With time, resources, and expertise already stretched, they needed a way to meet the requirements quickly and in a way that made commercial sense.

Solution Implementation

Clinical Partners were introduced to Profit Impact through Innovate UK's Scale Up team, who had seen the results delivered for other SMEs. From the first conversation, it was clear they needed a partner who could cut through complexity, make the process achievable, and align sustainability work with commercial priorities.

They began in November 2023 with a focused first phase. Working directly with the CEO and Chief Medical Officer, Profit Impact created a safe space to understand the requirements, map the gaps, and agree on what a compliant Carbon Reduction Plan should look like for their business. Using the MindSeed platform, they combined fortnightly calls with structured learning and action planning, keeping everything practical and on track.

In phase two, the work extended to a wider internal team. The project was broken into streams, with clear ownership assigned, and team members supported one-to-one to keep momentum. This approach meant sustainability actions were embedded in daily operations, rather than sitting as an extra "to-do" on top of already heavy workloads.

The next phase will focus on integrating education and impact across the full value chain, so suppliers, partners, and clients feel the benefit. By managing the process externally, Profit Impact reduced pressure on internal teams while building the internal knowledge Clinical Partners will need to own and maintain the plan in the future.

Results

By completing a compliant Carbon Reduction Plan, Clinical Partners secured their ability to continue bidding for NHS contracts. Without it, they would have been locked out of NHS procurement entirely. This step alone protected critical revenue streams and positioned them more competitively in future bids. Operationally, the project delivered early wins. They established a baseline across Scopes 1, 2, and 3, introduced tangible carbon reduction measures, and trained eight members of staff in carbon literacy. These are practical steps that now form the foundation for deeper reductions as the programme progresses. The process has also shifted the organisation's ambition. What began as a compliance exercise has become a move towards industry leadership.

As founder and Commercial Director, Adrian Clarke, explains:

“We’ve spent about the last 18 months getting to where we are and setting off on a net-zero project. We’ve quietly gone about this with board approval, utilising the resources available to us at the time, and have moved things along. We want to really move this mission forward with a bit more clarity and pace. We aim to be an exemplar organisation, not just a small team operating with limited engagement within the organisation.”

That honesty matters. ESG is now on the board agenda, but engagement beyond the immediate project team is the next hurdle. Clinical Partners have reached the point where they know deeper integration across the business and supply chain is essential. Transforming a fast-growing SME takes time, education, and persistence, but the direction of travel is now clear.

Testimonials

Clinical Partners described their experience of working with Profit Impact as “practical, educational and enjoyable.” They valued the balance of ambition and pragmatism, noting that Profit Impact understood both the commercial drivers of an SME and the ESG intelligence needed to deliver change.

Clinical Partners also highlighted the value of external management:

“Profit Impact will take you on your journey at your pace and deliver results. Using them adds significant value by externally managing ESG efforts, an area where there is often an internal expertise gap that leads to a lack of momentum.”

Conclusion

For Clinical Partners, the Carbon Reduction Plan was more than a compliance exercise. It was a turning point. Without it, they couldn’t even step into the NHS tender process. With it, they not only secured their ability to bid but also strengthened their commercial position and set themselves on a path to industry leadership.

The real shift has been in mindset. What began as “what do we need to do to comply?” has become “how do we lead by example?” That journey hasn’t been easy, it’s taken time, education, and persistence. But the payoff is clear: stronger tender credentials, tangible carbon reductions, and a business ready to integrate sustainability into its long-term growth.

This is the reality for every SME working with the NHS. Sustainability isn’t an optional extra. It’s now the gateway to opportunity. And those who treat it as a commercial strategy, not just a tick-box, are the ones who will win contracts, build resilience, and leave a legacy they’re proud of.

Clinical Partners: At a Glance

Sector: Mental health, autism, and ADHD services

Size: 300+ staff, 22 clinics across the UK

Client Type: NHS supplier and private provider



Challenge:

To stay eligible for NHS contracts under PPN 06/21, Clinical Partners needed a compliant Carbon Reduction Plan (CRP), fast. With limited internal capacity, incomplete Scope 3 data, and strict NHS Evergreen requirements, the risk of losing tender eligibility was real.

Approach:

Introduced to Profit Impact through Innovate UK's Scale Up team, Clinical Partners followed a two-phase process using the MindSeed platform:

- Phase 1: CEO and CMO worked with Profit Impact to define a compliant CRP, close data gaps, and align targets with business priorities.
- Phase 2: Extended to operational teams with defined workstreams, one-to-one support, and carbon literacy training for eight employees.
- This approach reduced internal pressure while embedding accountability and capability within the business.

Results:

- Secured NHS tender eligibility, protecting multi-million-pound revenue streams
- Established a baseline across Scopes 1, 2, and 3
- Implemented measurable carbon reduction measures
- Built internal knowledge and engagement, with ESG now a board-level agenda item
- Reframed sustainability from a compliance task to a strategic growth driver

Impact:

Clinical Partners turned a regulatory requirement into a commercial advantage, positioning themselves as a credible, forward-thinking NHS partner, ready to lead on sustainability, not just follow it.

Quote:

"Profit Impact took us on the journey at our pace and delivered results. They filled the expertise gap and created real momentum."

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