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Taking climate action when you don't have an office

When an organisation has an office, it can be clear how to lower your emissions: switch to green electricity, ban plastic cutlery and crockery from the kitchen, get an energy audit of the building. But what if you don't have an office? Increasingly, organisations are choosing to operate on a home-based system, meaning staff work from their own homes. This usually means reduced emissions from not having an office building to maintain and potentially having reduced commuting needs. However, this also means that the eco-activity of an organisation's staff is no longer within its control, and it can be harder to see how you can take climate action.

This guide tells you some of the ways you can take climate action as a home-based organisation, so that you can feel confident with your own contribution to combatting the climate crisis.

Supporting staff with lowering their carbon footprint

If all, or at least most employees are working to reduce their impact on the environment at home, then that helps to lower the emissions of a home-based organisation. To support staff to reduce their carbon emissions and waste, you could consider the following:

- Encourage home-owning employees to view their Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating online. Using the [UK Government's EPC finder](#) allows you to see what changes you could make to your property to improve its rating. The better the rating, the more efficient the home. EPC ratings are only valid for 10 years and cost around £70 to renew. Perhaps this is something your organisation could pay for in the absence of an office building audit!
- Your organisation could consider providing small loans or grants to staff for home improvements that would lower carbon emissions. Perhaps an employee needs help replacing a single-glazed window or insulating their loft.
- Encourage employees to switch to a green tariff with their energy supplier. There are lots of companies who provide green electricity and partially green gas, like [Octopus Energy](#).
- Encourage employees to take small steps in their home like switching off lights, recycling, greening homes, or composting. Small actions add up!



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Finances

Finances are an often-neglected area to reduce carbon emissions. Many banks and investment firms invest in war, bomb-making and the oil industry, yet they make it difficult for customers to see how exactly where their money is going. Think about the following to help take climate action through your finances:

- Choose a bank with a strong ethical focus. This way you can ensure that your company finances are not being used to fuel oil industry or poor social/governance practices whilst you are not using them. Find examples of [ethical \(an unethical!\) banks](#).
- Pensions operate in the same way as investment funds. To help promote green energy and climate change innovations amongst others, make sure that the pension provider your company uses have an ethical option (such as an ESG fund). These sorts of funds commit to choosing investments that meet specific environmental, social and governance criteria. Bear in mind, however, that ESG funds are usually opt-in, so each staff member would have to choose this option or themselves. Find examples of [ethical pension providers](#).

Reducing your digital carbon footprint

We hear a lot in the world about reducing carbon footprints – how can we travel less, use less energy and reduce how much carbon we release into the atmosphere. But did you know that every email, WhatsApp message, Google search and document stored in the cloud also has a carbon footprint? All these things require energy and electricity to do.

There's so much you can do from which search engines you use to changing your device settings.

- Have a look at going Green Together's 'How to reduce your digital carbon footprint' guide for tips and tricks on lowering digital emissions.

Choosing sustainable transport

Driving to work or to a meeting is often expected in an organisation. Even job applications sometimes require people to have access to car and license. But petrol and diesel cars are large emitters of greenhouse gases. To encourage a shift in car usage, here's what you can think about:



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- When staff do have to travel to a meeting or event, encourage them to take sustainable transport (walking, cycling, bus, train, or a combination). If you are planning the meeting yourself, choose a location that is easily accessible by public transport.
- Make sure to allow time in people's diaries for extra travel time – public transport can sometimes take longer so it is important staff feel they have the option.
- Sign up to opportunities like the [cycle to work scheme](#) which provides staff the chance to acquire bicycles tax free, or [Nexus' Corporate Metro Season Ticket](#), providing staff with large discounts on metro travel.
- Where driving is essential, encourage car sharing or the use of car clubs like [Co-Wheels](#) or [Enterprise Car Club](#). Enterprise Car Club also offer corporate memberships to suit the size of your organisation.

Climate crisis advocacy and campaigning

A great way to take climate action as an organisation without an office (well – any organisation!) is to get involved in climate crisis campaigns. These collective efforts are seeking to make systemic changes and are a valuable asset to climate action.

Below are some North East-wide climate campaigns you might want to investigate:

- [VONNE Climate Action Alliance \(VCAA\)](#) - supporting communities in the North East of England to confront the climate crisis using the hard lessons drawn from our past, the strengths of our community life in the present and the hard science that must inform our future, to guide and empower our actions.
- [Going Green Together](#) - Supporting the North East's VCSE sector towards Net Zero.
- [NEECCo](#) - a cross-sector initiative bringing the region together to tackle climate emergency, reverse ecological collapse and deliver an urgent and just transition.