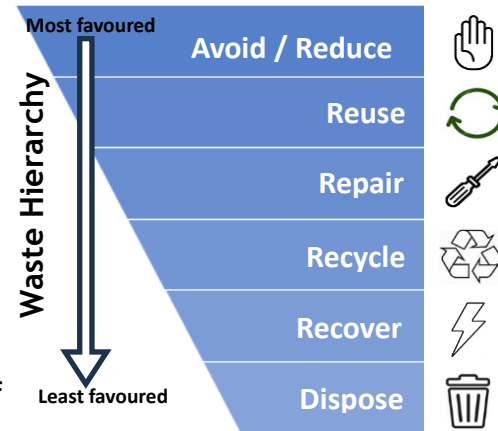


Quality Improvement: Beyond your SMART Aim

Quality Improvement (QI) is at its most powerful when we look beyond the stated aims and consider the broader value it creates, from financial savings and reduced waste to lower carbon emissions and fairer outcomes for our communities. By recognising these wider impacts, we can better demonstrate and celebrate how QI strengthens the sustainability, efficiency and equity of the services we deliver.



Reducing waste not only improves productivity, but also contributes directly to **staff wellbeing, patient safety,** and the **sustainability of services.**

Do you recognise any of these categories of waste in your services?

Failure of Care Delivery	Unnecessary appointments, delays, cancellations. Presence of safety issues (e.g. pressure ulcers, Surgical Site Infections) - increased cost of treatment and length of stay, time/cost of investigating and responding to poor patient experience or outcomes
Failure of Care Co-ordination	Delays due to bottlenecks. DNAs due to late appointment letters. Duplication of tests. Poor discharge documentation for onward care. Lack of clarity of roles or role requirements. Lack of standardisation
Overtreatment	Unnecessary use of medications or diagnostic tests
Administrative Complexity	Duplication of time / effort / resource. Documentation that does not add value. Unnecessary steps. Difficulties with computer systems
Pricing Failures	Contracts for resources that are more costly than elsewhere (with the same quality)
Fraud / Abuse of the System	Hopefully not widespread, but does occur...
Waste of 'Spirit'	Poor staff wellbeing / motivation / engagement / incivility. Absence, productivity, recruitment.



Every QI project presents an opportunity to **reduce carbon impact**, even when carbon wasn't the original focus – e.g.



- Streamlining outpatient pathways can reduce patient travel emissions
- Switching to reusable equipment where safe and appropriate to do so, cuts procurement carbon
- Preventing unnecessary admissions reduces energy use and resource consumption
- Digitising processes reduces material and disposal impact

A truly successful improvement does not simply improve care on average, it **improves care fairly** across all patient groups. Benefits realisation should consider:

- Whether the change reduces variation in access or outcomes
- Whether improvements benefit under-served or marginalised groups
- Whether patient insights have informed the design
- Whether staff or patients from different backgrounds experience barriers differently

