

Why social value means greater value: how buying British supports our country, our people and the environment

We will always need to buy some goods and services from overseas, but has the NHS truly embraced the social value offered by the UK MedTech industry?

Respected across the world, the NHS was set up in 1948 to provide everyone in the UK with healthcare based on their needs, and not on their ability to pay.

Although many of us think about the NHS as being our local hospital, the reach of the NHS is much wider and includes GP services, dentists and even the local pharmacist, all of whom may be employed by the NHS – and of course many people are visited by outreach services like those offered by district nurses in their own homes.

More people work for the NHS than any other organisation in the country: 1.3 million people in England alone, which is around one in every forty people.

These days, there is a growing focus on making sure that taxpayers funding the service are getting value for money – and there is also recognition that the NHS is in a unique position to contribute to society, incorporating evidence of commitment to sustainability and social values into requirements for the millions of pounds' worth of contracts it awards suppliers every year.



Legislation and policy guidance

The premise for this is enshrined in UK law, firstly with the [Public Services \(Social Value\) Act of 2012](#) which requires 'public authorities to have regard to economic, social and environmental well-being in connection with public services contracts; and for connected purposes.'

This means that the relevant authorities must consider how their procurement of goods and services improves – or contributes to – economic, social and environmental wellbeing.

A further policy paper on the topic was published in September 2020, setting out objectives under five themes:



COVID-19 RECOVERY – help local communities to manage and recover from the impact of COVID-19



TACKLING ECONOMIC INEQUALITY – create new businesses, new jobs and new skills; increase supply chain resilience and capacity



FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE – effective stewardship of the environment



EQUAL OPPORTUNITY – reduce the disability employment gap; tackle workforce inequality



WELLBEING – improve health and wellbeing; improve community integration

Explanatory information was provided through [supporting documents](#) – the Social Value Model, Guide to using the Social Value Model and Social Value Model Quick Reference Table (a mere 13 pages long!).

NHS response

With a clear commitment to following the spirit of the legislation, the NHS issued its [Social Value Playbook](#) in 14th July 2025.

It set out what social value means to the NHS by stating:

“ Our health is shaped by the places we live, with social, environmental, and economic factors playing a critical role in people’s long-term health. Applying social value provides NHS commissioning and buying teams the unique opportunity to improve patients’ lives and the communities they live in through how we buy and the way we manage contracts. Social value in procurement drives the supply chain to deliver additional social, economic, and environmental benefits alongside their commercial commitments. ”

It explains that this is not just a ‘nice to do’ but has clear benefits. When applied in procurement and delivered throughout the life of a contract, social value can:

- Support targeted improvements to health inequalities impacting our most at risk communities to improve health outcomes and quality of life
- Create resilient businesses and opportunities for quality employment and skills development
- Improve innovation and supply chain resilience
- Tackle climate change and reduce waste

These kinds of objectives are echoed in the NHS Supply Chain which sets expectations of its suppliers through its [Sustainability & Social Value requirements](#).

Our industry’s trade association: ABHI

The Association of British HealthTech Industries (ABHI) is our health technology industry association in the UK.

In its paper on sustainability, it examines the opportunities and challenges for our sector, not least the impact of high levels of regulation and working in a complex, global landscape.

For full details [CLICK HERE](#).



So, what does this mean in practice?

No-one is naive enough to believe that UK healthcare could function adequately without some sourcing from overseas, but is the UK MedTech industry offered sufficient consideration during the procurement process, with social value in mind?

Going back to that September 2020 Policy Paper, this is how the industry has responded those five key objectives:

COVID-19 recovery

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK MedTech industry – much of which consists of SMEs – was pivotal in supporting UK healthcare. Companies across the board pulled out all the stops to deliver equipment and services in the face of unprecedented demand.

At Anetic Aid, we remained open and encouraged our supply chain to do the same, which allowed us to maintain production and fulfil both our regular commitments and respond to urgent requests – there was a particular demand for pressure relieving gel products.

Our Regional Account Managers were available to support – on or off site – throughout the lockdowns and engineers continued to service and maintain equipment in hospitals, following strict protocols to protect patients, staff and their own health.

As an employer, we have also played our part in supporting the community during the recovery: most of our team is made of local people (generally living within about seven miles of the two sites where they are based) and we have strong links with other local businesses (suppliers, retailers, hospitality) as well as those based further afield. As a principle, we are committed to both of these aspects of our business long term.

Tackling economic inequality

UK MedTech manufacturers, many of them privately owned SMEs, have been declining in numbers in recent years. Well known names have disappeared from the landscape, bought by multi-national MedTech corporations or private equity firms, only to be absorbed or dismantled, leading to a loss of employment, skills, experience, knowledge - and the invaluable support offered to UK healthcare.

This represents the loss not just of the individual companies concerned, but also their suppliers. An SME, for example, may employ 50 people directly, but through their supply chain they indirectly employ many more, in their local community and across the UK. In the case of UK-based subsidiaries of large overseas businesses, a subsidiary may employ a small number of staff and offer a much-reduced contribution towards direct and indirect employment than a UK MedTech manufacturer.

And finally, by definition, the primary market for most UK MedTech manufacturers is the one on their doorstep, in other words, the UK, giving them a vested interest in offering the best possible level of service to their clients. In return, this delivers supply chain resilience, capacity and, importantly, stock holding in the UK.

With bases in Baildon, West Yorkshire and Havant, Hampshire, Anetic Aid has nearly 70 members of staff and sources products and services from around UK suppliers who provide materials, components, finishings, sub-contract manufacture, utilities, facilities & infrastructure, marketing, IT, WEEE and recycling, to name but a few.

90% of the components for our flagship products – the QA3 Patient Stretcher and the QA4 Mobile Surgery System are sourced from UK suppliers.

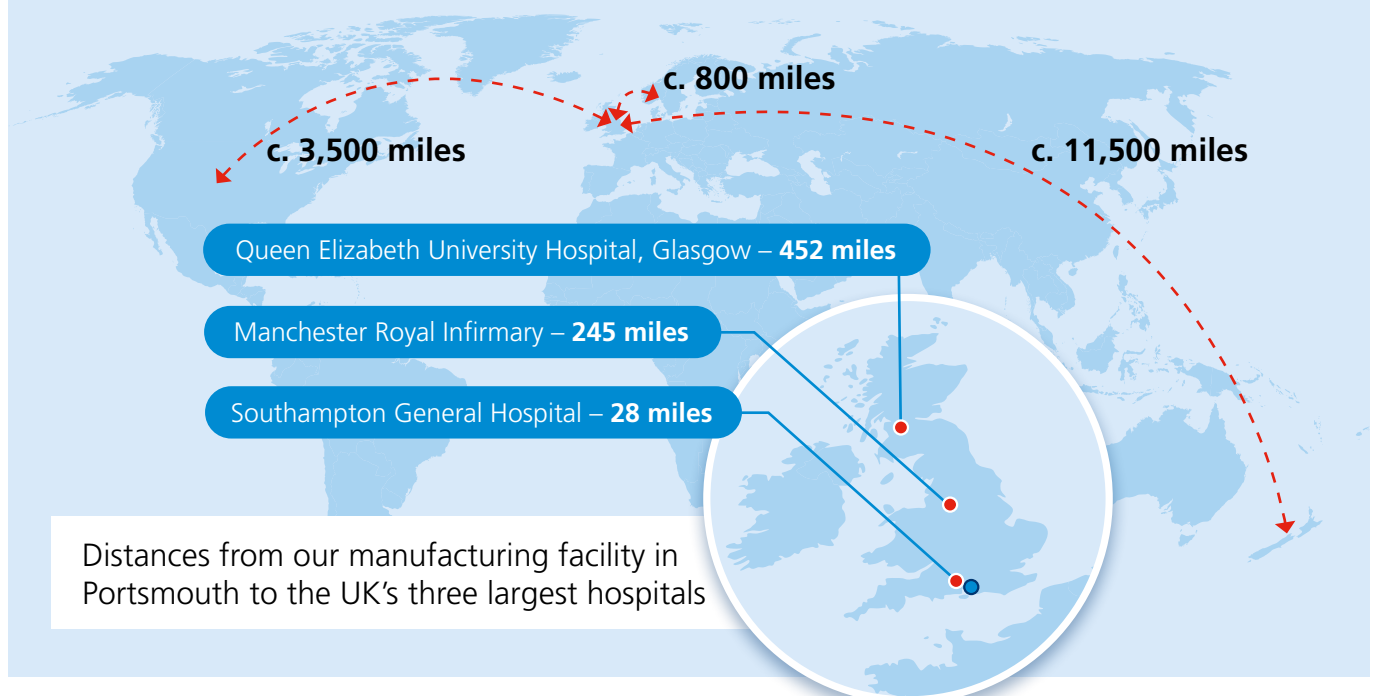
Fighting climate change

In the same way that 'food miles' have become a major consideration for many people – the carbon footprint is now being taken into account when making procurement decisions for MedTech.

Customer support has sustainability implications too: do overseas MedTech suppliers have adequate numbers of UK-based service personnel and sufficient stocks of spares in the UK? If a breakdown involves a costly return to an overseas base or the shipment of spare parts on an ad hoc basis, would this represent a substantial hidden addition to the carbon footprint?

Anetic Aid is the only UK manufacturer of Patient Stretchers

Worldwide manufacturers of patient stretchers are located in countries such as the US, New Zealand and Scandinavia



Anetic Aid is fully committed to sustainability in as many areas of operation as possible, minimising our carbon footprint for our products and customer service operations.

A major initiative was the installation of 997 solar panels at our manufacturing facility in Portsmouth where we make the QA4 and QA3 Trolley Systems, Stainless Steel Furniture and many items from our Operation Table Accessories range. The system not only covers all of our own electricity requirements, but means we are actually a net producer for the grid.



As well as our 'buy hybrid' vehicle policy, we also supported the Westbourne Greening Project in West Sussex by donating three trees for the village's primary school. CEO Guy Schofield (a local tree warden) was joined by a group of pupils who enthusiastically helped plant the Red Oak, Oriental Plane and Black Walnut in the school grounds.

See more details of our [environmental](#) and [social value](#) policies.

Equal opportunity and wellbeing

UK MedTech draws employees from a wide scope of social and ethnic groups, both directly and indirectly through its supply chain. It is heavily reliant on the physical and mental health of those people, as even a small amount of absenteeism can have a serious impact on productivity, making the support and benefits packages offered in the UK a significant safety net to safeguard supply.

Summary

As Anetic Aid Sales Director Andrew Curtin explains:



Andrew Curtin
Sales Director



“ UK MedTech epitomises the principles of the NHS Social Value Playbook: speaking for ourselves, we take these issues seriously and can evidence our contribution and commitment to them.

'We rely on the NHS Framework and Procurement Professionals to follow them too, and to fully take them into account when placing orders for all the thousands of products they need.

'With our 40 plus years in this business, we also like to think we have useful perspectives and experience to offer: we are always pleased to contribute our thoughts on how we, and others, can make these principles work in practice and give genuine value to NHS users – and to the UK as a whole – on every level.

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For more information on any of our products or service contracts, call:
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