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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Greener inhalers set to improve patient care and help towards a zero carbon Greater Manchester**

**Wednesday 3 November 2022**

Greater Manchester patients are speaking out this week to share their experiences of switching to a greener inhaler, with lower emissions. In a new video, they talk candidly about why they made the change and the impact it has had – both for them and the planet.

Inhalers, widely prescribed for those with asthma or COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), are making a significant contribution to Greater Manchester’s carbon footprint. In any given month, there are over 300,000 inhalers prescribed in the city region with an environmental impact equivalent to the emissions from 28,000 cars.

Most inhalers in Greater Manchester are metered dose inhalers (MDI), which contain propellants known as hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), which are powerful greenhouse gases. Many people find a more environmentally friendly dry powder inhaler (DPI) helps to relieve their symptoms at least as well as the alternatives, and their carbon footprint is less than 1kg CO2e\* per device – compared to 28kg CO2e (comparison based on blue reliever inhalers).

Val Bayliss-Brideaux, 54, from Oldham, speaks of her own experiences in the film: “What I discovered was, by swapping my Ventolin inhaler, which was equivalent to driving 170 miles from London to Sheffield, my new inhaler, when I use it, is the equivalent of 4 miles. This is a huge difference in terms of environmental impact and air pollution, and a reduction in my carbon footprint. Since I’ve switched, I’ve also noticed a big difference in my breathing, which has enabled me to do more walking and feel much more in control of my breathing and my airways.”

Dr David McKelvey, a GP and clinical lead for sustainability in primary care for NHS Greater Integrated Care, said:

“Switching from a gas-propelled, to a greener, powder based inhaler can mean it is easier to use, reduces the need for a spacer and will usually have a counter, so you know how many doses you have left, which reduces waste.

“We know it can feel difficult changing a medicine when you have been taking it for some time. Your GP practice team and pharmacist are there for support and together can help you choose an inhaler that is best for you – and the environment. They will make sure you know how to use it properly, so you get the best control of your condition. You can discuss this as part of a regular asthma review appointment. While powder based inhalers won’t be right for everyone, they can be the best up-to-date treatment for most patients.”

Lisa Jones, 42, from Salford, talked about when she changed to a new inhaler: “When I switched over to the green inhaler, I didn’t notice any difference. It was a very easy transition. It’s got a counter on it, so I know exactly how many doses are left and it’s easy to know when to order a new prescription. Changing to my green inhaler was an important step for helping to change my carbon footprint. Small changes lead to big changes in the long run.”

Colin Bayley, 75, from Salford, encouraged others to switch to a greener inhaler : “I wanted to make the change because I’d read about it being more environmentally friendly and I want to make my contribution to a safe and cleaner Greater Manchester. If anybody wants to change to a green inhaler, I would say to them, there is no difference whatsoever – just do it!”

Those who switch may find they have inhalers leftover at home. Unfortunately, recycling schemes for inhalers are not readily available at present. All inhalers should be taken to pharmacies for safe disposal. If inhalers are included with general waste, they can become damaged, releasing residual greenhouse gases and medicines into the environment.

Sarah Price, chief officer for population health and inequalities, NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care, said:

“Around 80,000 greener, dry powder inhalers are being prescribed per month in Greater Manchester. This is great news, but they still account for just 25% of all those in use in our city region.

We need to do more if we are to meet our target of a net zero carbon footprint by 2038. Climate change is the single biggest threat to our planet, environment, and the people of Greater Manchester. So, it is vitally important that we take steps to reduce our carbon footprint and make healthcare more sustainable. The shift to greener inhalers is just one element of our ambitious plans for a greener NHS for Greater Manchester.”

**ENDS**

**Editor’s notes**

Val, Lisa and Colin, who feature in the film, are all available for interview.

\*CO2e stands for carbon dioxide equivalent. This is a standard measurement of greenhouse gas emissions.

In July 2022, a total of 316,037 inhalers were prescribed in Greater Manchester. Of these, 81,208 were DPIs, 226,037 were gas powered MDIs, and 8,792 were soft mist (a lower carbon alternative with limited inhaler options, only suitable for patients with COPD). Overall, 25.7% of all inhalers prescribed were DPIs.

Inhalers account for 5% of NHS carbon emissions nationally.

Up to 25-50% of propellant gases can remain in an MDI even once all the medicine has been used. This can leak out if inhalers are not safely disposed of.

About NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care:

NHS Greater Manchester Integrated Care (NHS GM) was set up on 1 July following the passage of the Health and Care Act 2022. It took over from 10 clinical commissioning groups to become responsible for the allocation of, and accounting for, NHS resources. It supports integration within the NHS to take a joint approach to agreeing and delivering ambitions for the health of the population. These new arrangements mark the latest stage in Greater Manchester’s journey to more joined up working, which has developed since the city region’s health and social care devolution deal in February 2015.

NHS GM’s ambitious plans for a greener NHS for Greater Manchester are set out in our Green Plan, which can be viewed here: <https://bit.ly/NHSGMGreenPlan>.