SUPPLIER GUIDE · 2026

The NHS Evergreen Assessment: a simple guide for suppliers

What Evergreen is, what the four maturity levels require, what the questionnaire asks, and what to do before your next NHS tender closes.

LEVELS	GATE SINCE	VALID FOR
1–4	Apr 2026	12 months

If you supply the NHS, or want to, you will start seeing the word "Evergreen" in tender documents. It is not a scheme you pay to join and it is not a certification. It is a questionnaire, run by NHS England, asking how far along your company is with cutting its carbon emissions and behaving responsibly. You fill it in once a year and get a score from 1 to 4.

That score is now a gate on some NHS work. Since April 2026, bidding for a new NHS Supply Chain framework means reaching Level 1 by the time the tender closes. If you have not, your bid does not get looked at.

It is not necessary to have knowledge of different scopes in carbon reporting. This guide will give a clear understanding of what Evergreen is, four levels in intensity matrix exist as well as what questions to expect.

CONTENTS

SECTION 01

What is the NHS Evergreen Assessment?

The Evergreen Sustainable Supplier Assessment is an online form where you tell the NHS how you are doing on carbon and sustainability, and get given a maturity level from 1 to 4 in return.

> **It is a self-assessment where you answer the questions yourself rather than being audited. You do it once, it stays valid for twelve months, and every NHS buyer can see it.**

NHS England runs it, through its Central Commercial Function. It exists because roughly two thirds of the NHS carbon footprint comes from things it buys rather than things it does, so the NHS cannot hit its own targets without its suppliers moving too. It is aiming for net zero by 2040 for emissions it controls directly, and 2045 for its supply chain. That second date is why Levels 3 and 4 ask for a 2045 target rather than 2050.

Does this apply to me?

For most suppliers, right now, it is strongly encouraged rather than legally required. But there are two situations where it is a hard requirement, and one of them catches a lot of companies.

HARD REQUIREMENT

You must have Level 1 if you are bidding for a new NHS Supply Chain framework.

This means that there should be a fully compliant Carbon Reduction Plan. From 6 April 2026, suppliers need Level 1 at the point the tender closes. Before that date, any submission at any level was accepted. That change is the main reason suppliers are suddenly asking about Evergreen.

HARD REQUIREMENT

You must have a submission on file if you are bidding for an NHS England medicines tender.

This has applied to tenders run by the Medicines Value and Access directorate since January 2024, covering medicines, devices and appliances, borderline substances, plasma derived products and homecare. Here you need a live submission, but not yet a level. If there is none when the procurement team checks at the selection questionnaire stage, you are no further considered.

The assessment is open to any supplier that provides, or plans to provide, goods or services to NHS England, an integrated care board, or an NHS trust in England. Health bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can also see the data. Subcontractors do not have to complete it, though many do because their own customers ask for the number.

If your company files Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting, known as SECR, in its annual accounts, you already hold some of the data Evergreen wants. Our team has already put together a checklist of the 2026 compliance requirements, from SECR through to the new NHS Evergreen rules if you want to see how the pieces overlap.

How often do you redo it, and what happens if you ignore it?

The Evergreen Assessment should be redone once a year. Your level is valid for twelve months, then you do it again. You can update it mid-year whenever something significant changes, and you should if the change moves you up a level. You do not resubmit for each tender: one submission covers every NHS bid you make in that window.

If you bid for NHS Supply Chain frameworks, you get shut out. Not marked down. Shut out, before anyone reads your pricing or your quality answers. The same happens at the selection questionnaire stage of an NHS England medicines tender when there is no submission at all.

If you are neither of those, nothing happens today. But from 2030 the stated position is that only suppliers who can show progress will qualify for NHS contracts, and companies that wait until 2029 will be trying to build three years of carbon data in three months.

How to actually get started

01 Ask your bid team whether you already have an Atamis account and whether anyone has ever submitted an assessment, because sometimes it is done and nobody said.

02 Check whether your company has a published Carbon Reduction Plan and note its date.

03 Then log in and read the questions without answering them: an hour of that tells you which gaps you have and who owns each one.

04 Book time with those people before you fill anything in.

SECTION 02

Maturity criteria and carbon reporting

A maturity level is a single number from 1 to 4 that says how far your company has got with measuring and cutting its emissions, and how much of that has been checked by someone independent.

Higher is better and Level 4 is the top. The criteria were updated in April 2026 to line up with what the NHS will expect in future years, so anything written before then may describe an older version. Some published articles also say there are five levels. There are four.

LEVEL
1

The entry point

You have published a Carbon Reduction Plan meeting the government's PPN 006 standard, committed to net zero by 2050 across your UK operations, and reported your emissions. The plan must have been published within the twelve months before you submit, and signed off by your board.

LEVEL
2

Level 1, taken worldwide

Same 2050 target date, but covering your global operations rather than just the UK, and all the supply chain emissions relevant to you rather than a starter set. Level 2 is deliberately built to match what the NHS expects of everyone from April 2027, so reaching it now means you are already ready.

LEVEL
3

An earlier date, and an outside check

You need a 2045 net zero target, independently validated. You also need a public modern slavery statement and to have completed the Modern Slavery Assessment Tool, a free government questionnaire about labour risk in your supply chain, usually shortened to MSAT.

LEVEL
4

For companies genuinely ahead

Everything in Level 3, but your 2045 targets must cover your whole global group including your ultimate parent, validated at that level. You also need to report through a recognised transparency scheme such as CDP, EcoVadis or B Corp, and to be either mapping your supply chain or investigating incidents and reducing the high risks you find.

What emissions reporting actually is

As mentioned previously, the Evergreen Maturity Criteria is based on carbon emissions. Emissions reporting means adding up the greenhouse gases your company causes in a year and writing the total down. The unit is tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, written as tCO_2e, which converts all the different gases into one comparable number.

You get there by multiplying activity data by a published conversion factor: 4,000 litres of diesel in your vans, multiplied by the government's free published factor for diesel. So this is arithmetic on top of invoices, and the hard part is finding the invoices.

Emissions are split into three groups so companies do not count the same tonne twice.

SCOPE 1

Fuel you burn yourself

Gas in your boiler, diesel in your own vans, refrigerant leaking out of your air conditioning. If you own or control the thing burning or leaking, it is Scope 1.

SCOPE 2

Electricity you buy

You burn nothing when you switch on a light, but a power station burns something on your behalf. For most office based companies this is the easiest number to get, because it is on your energy bills.

SCOPE 3

Everyone else

Making the things you buy, delivering them, staff driving to work, business flights, waste going to landfill, and what happens to your product after you sell it. There are fifteen official categories.

For nearly every company Scope 3 is the biggest number by a wide margin and the hardest to work out. If you are a distributor reselling finished goods, almost your entire footprint is Scope 3, because the factory that made them is someone else's Scope 1. We have already written about why Scope 3 is where most Carbon Reduction Plans fall apart, and how to handle it.

The good news is that Level 1 does not ask for all fifteen. Under PPN 006 it asks for five: upstream transport and distribution, waste generated in your operations, business travel, employee commuting, and downstream transport and distribution. Those five were picked because most companies can estimate them from expenses claims, waste invoices and a staff travel survey.

Level 2 is where "all relevant Scope 3" arrives, and that brings in the big one: purchased goods and services. That single category is usually why the jump from Level 1 to Level 2 takes a lot of effort.

What a Carbon Reduction Plan is

A Carbon Reduction Plan, or CRP, is a short public document stating your emissions and what you are doing to cut them, on a government template, so it runs to a few pages.

It must contain a commitment to net zero by 2050 as a minimum, your baseline year emissions, your current year emissions, the reduction projects you have in place, and a director's signature. It must be published on your own website, not just emailed to a buyer, and refreshed at least annually.

The NHS applies this in two tiers. Procurements worth £5 million a year or more, and new frameworks, need a full CRP. Lower value ones above the relevant threshold need only a shorter Net Zero Commitment. Your Evergreen level is judged against a full CRP.

> **Your CRP must have been published within twelve months of your Evergreen submission, at every level. A plan from three years ago will not count, but it is always great to have a baseline data.**

Two separate obligations sharing much of the same data. Your CRP goes on your website and gets linked in each individual tender. Evergreen is one annual submission on Atamis, and it checks whether the CRP exists and what is in it. Since you cannot reach Level 1 without a compliant plan, write the plan first, publish it, then answer Evergreen using its numbers.

SECTION 03

What questions does the Evergreen Assessment ask?

The assessment consists of 9 sections that question the company's basic information as well as what emissions hotspots exist within the company's operations, plus supplementary questions related to corporate social values and goals. The following parts of the section will demonstrate those questions in greater detail.

Who are you, and at what level are you reporting?

Company details first, then one question that matters more than it looks: which entity are you reporting for? You can choose a contracting entity, regional or global level, but the figures must fully cover the entity holding the NHS contract, and you must use the same level throughout. Mixing global emissions with UK targets makes the submission unusable.

If you are a subsidiary, you cannot just point at your parent's submission. It must sit under the bidding company's own supplier record, even if the data inside is group level.

What have you promised?

Targets. Your net zero target year, what it covers, whether it is published, whether a board approved it, and whether anyone independently validated it.

Watch the phrase "publicly available". A target in an internal slide deck does not count. It needs to be somewhere a buyer could find it without asking you.

What are you actually emitting, and who checked?

The heaviest section, and the one needing real data. Expect to enter emissions by scope, for a baseline year and your most recent year, calculated to the GHG Protocol standard, the international rulebook for carbon accounting. You will then be asked whether those figures have been verified by a third party, and by whom.

> EXAMPLE QUESTION
>
> Please provide your Scope 1, Scope 2 and relevant Scope 3 emissions for your most recent reporting year in tCO_2e.

What are you doing about it?

Targets and totals are not enough alone. This asks what you have actually changed: renewable electricity contracts, fleet replacement, energy efficiency work, waste reduction, supplier engagement. It also covers your CRP and product level carbon footprinting.

Read the product footprint questions closely, because they are the April 2028 milestone on the NHS roadmap. Answering "not yet" is fine now, and will not be fine indefinitely.

What is your wider social and ethical position?

Evergreen is not only about carbon. This covers modern slavery, labour standards, social value, waste, water and environmental management. Modern slavery bites hardest at higher levels: you will be asked whether you publish a statement, whether you have completed the MSAT, and whether you are actively mapping your supply chain or investigating risks you have found.

> EXAMPLE QUESTION
>
> Have you completed the Modern Slavery Assessment Tool, and do you publish a modern slavery statement?

Anything else, and consent

The last part is administrative: any additional information, and your consent for the NHS to use and share your data with other health bodies.

Do not skim it, because this is also where the assessment asks how you engage with the NHS and with your own suppliers. Evergreen is meant as a two way conversation, not a filing exercise. Suppliers who describe real collaboration, such as joint work with a trust on packaging or a programme to get their own suppliers reporting emissions, give buyers something to remember. Leaving it blank gives them nothing.

CHECKLIST

Before you finish your assessment, make sure you have all of this to hand

- [ ] Twelve months of energy bills for every site you occupy
- [ ] Fuel records or mileage logs for vehicles you own or lease
- [ ] Refrigerant top-up records for air conditioning and refrigeration
- [ ] Waste transfer notes or invoices from your waste contractor
- [ ] Business travel data: flights, rail, hotel nights, mileage claims
- [ ] Employee numbers by site, plus commuting patterns if you have them
- [ ] A full year of purchase ledger data by supplier and spend category
- [ ] Your Carbon Reduction Plan and modern slavery statement, with dates
- [ ] Your target wording, exactly as it appears publicly
- [ ] Any verification or validation certificates

Where suppliers most often get stuck

Purchased Goods and Services is the largest Scope 3 category for most suppliers and the one with the least data. The usual first move is a spend based estimate. You can take what you spent with each supplier category and apply a published factor per pound. It is rough, but a good starting point which is accepted. We have written up the seven mistakes companies make most often with Scope 3 reporting and how to fix them, and purchased goods appear more than once on that list.

It is also essential to choose the right baseline year. Pick a year you have solid data for, not the one with the missing emissions data. If you pick 2020, expect a buyer to ask why a pandemic year is representative.

Sometimes companies confuse a commitment with a validated target. Saying you will be net zero by 2045 is a commitment. Having it approved by the SBTi is validation. Level 3 needs the second, and suppliers regularly claim Level 3 readiness on the strength of the first.

How does the assessment help companies to stand out?

Evergreen helps you stand out in two quite different ways, and it is worth being precise about which is which, because they get confused constantly. These are eligibility and scoring. Let's consider them separately.

ELIGIBILITY

A gate. You pass or you do not.

There are no marks for passing well. This is what Evergreen currently is. For new NHS Supply Chain frameworks you need Level 1 at tender close to be eligible. Reaching Level 4 earns no extra credit there: your level attracts no additional weighting and does not feed the qualitative scoring. For NHS England medicines tenders, an active submission is assessed pass or fail, bidders are not ranked by level, and submitting without reaching a level does not currently exclude you.

SCORING

Where you win points — and Evergreen is not that yet.

NHS England is explicit that the assessment was not designed as a scored or evaluated requirement in procurement. It has also said Evergreen outcomes may be considered in evaluation for future procurements, with the method set out in the tender documents.

The commercial connection is alongside eligibility and scoring. Once your company wants to achieve both parameters, it starts to perform above the market average and every time your company takes part in the tender, the work on achieving net zero and social value has been done.

What Evergreen will not do is win you contracts. No level guarantees anything, and a Level 4 supplier with a weak price and a poor service record still loses to a better bid. What it does is keep you in the room, remove a reason to reject you, and give you evidence for the parts of the tender that are scored.

What are you allowed to say publicly?

Once the NHS supplier submits the Evergreen Assessment, it is free to openly communicate about it to its internal and external stakeholders. However, there are some hidden catches where suppliers need to pay more attention to how this communication is presented.

ACCEPTABLE AND ENCOURAGED

- ✓ Communication of completion of the Assessment and your achieved maturity level on social media and your website
- ✓ Descriptions of the Assessment aligned with information publicly available and examples given in the Evergreen Assessment approved copy section
- ✓ Descriptions of your achieved maturity level aligned with examples provided by Evergreen

NOT PERMITTED

- ✗ Use of NHS photos or logo on marketing materials, such as websites, pamphlets, brochures, radio, television, print or digital advertising. See the NHS Identity Guidelines
- ✗ Changes to the specific descriptions provided about the Assessment and associated maturity criteria
- ✗ Any suggestion that the NHS endorses your organisation as a result of completing the Assessment
- ✗ Communication of completion in any national, regional, local or trade media. Media queries must go to NHS England's national media team: nhsengland.media@nhs.net
- ✗ Communication of your achieved maturity level beyond the 12-month validity period if you have not completed the Assessment annually

Why a higher level goes beyond the NHS

An Evergreen level is a shorthand other buyers can read. Reaching Level 2 means you have a global carbon footprint, all relevant Scope 3 categories, a board approved target and a published plan. That is most of what a large private sector procurement team asks for, and most of what a bank wants when sustainability terms are attached to lending. Level 3 means an independent body has checked your target, which is the assurance a cautious buyer looks for.

So the work does double duty. Do it for the NHS, then point at the result when a local authority, a big retailer or a tier one contractor asks similar questions. We have made a note about why a net zero strategy is turning into a competitive advantage rather than a compliance cost, which is the wider version of this argument.

Why acting early is an advantage

From April 2027, suppliers are expected to publicly report targets and emissions and publish a CRP covering their global Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions. That is Level 2 territory, so a company at Level 2 today is already compliant with a requirement that will surprise many competitors next year. From April 2028, product level carbon footprinting arrives. By 2030, only suppliers who can demonstrate progress will qualify.

It is essential to start as soon as possible since it takes more than a year to demonstrate your Net Zero commitment. A company with 2026 baseline data can show a trend in 2030. One starting in 2029 can show a single data point and a promise. There is also a queue problem: validation and verification are done by a limited number of bodies, and demand rises every time a requirement changes.

What are the next steps?

01 Find out where you stand

Log into Atamis, open the assessment and read it without answering. Check whether you have a published Carbon Reduction Plan and its date. An hour of this tells you whether you are a fortnight or six months from Level 1.

02 Get your energy and spend data moving

Ask facilities for twelve months of energy bills and finance for a year of purchase ledger data by supplier. These sit in other people's inboxes for weeks if you do not chase them, and nothing else starts until they land. We have already set out why your finance director should care about carbon reporting, not just your sustainability lead, which is a useful thing to forward.

03 Book the board slot

Your target and CRP need director level sign-off, and boards meet when boards meet, not when you need them to.

Definitions

TERM	WHAT IT MEANS
Atamis	The NHS procurement portal where you register and complete the assessment.
Scope 1	Emissions from fuel you burn yourself, such as gas in your boilers and diesel in your own vans.
Scope 2	Emissions from the electricity, heat or steam you buy and use.
Scope 3	Emissions caused by everyone else in your value chain, including what you buy, your deliveries and staff travel.
Carbon Reduction Plan (CRP)	A short public document, on a government template, stating your emissions and how you will cut them. Director-signed, refreshed annually.
PPN 006	The government rule setting out what a Carbon Reduction Plan must contain. Previously PPN 06/21.
SBTi	The Science Based Targets initiative, the main independent body that validates whether a climate target is credible.
MSAT	The Modern Slavery Assessment Tool, a free government questionnaire on labour risk in your supply chain. Required at Levels 3 and 4.

Frequently asked questions

Is the NHS Evergreen Assessment mandatory?

It depends what you are bidding for. New NHS Supply Chain frameworks require Level 1 by tender close, and NHS England medicines tenders require a live submission. For other NHS work it is encouraged rather than required, but from 2030 the NHS says suppliers will need to show progress through Evergreen to qualify.

How much does the Evergreen Assessment cost?

There is no fee. Atamis registration, a DUNS number and the MSAT are all free. The real cost is internal time, plus whatever you spend calculating your carbon footprint or getting targets validated.

What Evergreen level do I need?

Level 1 for new NHS Supply Chain frameworks, and for medicines tenders a submission but not currently a specific level. Otherwise aim for the highest level that honestly reflects your company. Level 2 suits most suppliers, because it matches the April 2027 expectation.

Is a Carbon Reduction Plan the same as an Evergreen Assessment?

No, they are separate and you need both. Your CRP is a public document on your website that you link to in each tender. Evergreen is one annual submission on Atamis, and it checks if a compliant CRP exists, so the plan comes first.

Can I use my parent company's Evergreen Assessment?

You can use group level data, but the submission must sit under your own supplier record. You may report at contracting entity, regional or global level, provided the figures fully cover whichever entity holds the contract.

What happens if I submit but do not reach a level?

For medicines tenders you are not currently excluded. For new NHS Supply Chain frameworks Level 1 is required, so a submission falling short will not make you eligible. Separately, since April 2026 the questions feeding Level 1 scoring must be answered for any submission to be accepted.

NetZero GROUP

BUILT TO MEASURE.

If you would rather not do this from scratch, that is what Net Zero Group is for.

We build carbon footprints that hold up to scrutiny, write and publish PPN 006 compliant Carbon Reduction Plans, and take suppliers through the assessment question by question. If you have a tender deadline coming and are not sure whether you are eligible, get in touch and we will work that out first.

netzero.co.uk

Talk to us about your next tender