Minister encourages NHS to go green

Health Minister Dr Brian Gibbons is encouraging all health professionals to help the environment at home and work, at the launch of NHS Wales Environment Week.

The campaign, which runs between 6 and 10 June, aims to raise awareness of simple but effective ways to go green. It has been organised by the Welsh Health Environmental Forum to coincide with 'United Nations World Environment Day' on 5 June, and the European Commission’s Green Week 31 May to 3 June.

Dr Gibbons said as Wales' largest employer, the NHS could play a vital role in helping to reduce our impact on the environment.

He said: "We must all work together to make a big difference - if we all do a little we all do a lot. "The NHS is a major user of energy and water, and producer of waste in Wales. By reducing the amount it consumes and gets rid of, the NHS can significantly reduce its impact on the environment.

"The week is about showing people how, by doing simple things, they can have a positive impact on the environment.

"In work, this could mean switching off lights, using energy-efficient lightbulbs, recycling and closing windows to reduce heat loss - all of which reduces energy and saves money. At home, it may be as easy as switching off the TV rather than leaving it on standby, or by taking a shower instead of a bath or even walking and cycling rather than using the car - helping the environment and your health."

Events are taking place in trusts across Wales to also show how NHS activities also have an impact on the environment. Staff are being encouraged to pledge what they will do to help the environment. These pledges will be collated to show how the NHS as a whole is helping make a difference by going green.

Notes:

The Environment Week is co-ordinated by Welsh Health Environmental Forum, a consultative body for the NHS in Wales on the environmental management of healthcare activities. Its membership includes representatives of NHS Trusts in Wales, members of Welsh Health Estates, Welsh Health Supplies and other representatives of professional groups within the NHS in Wales.

The 31st World Environment Day will be celebrated on Saturday, 5 June 2005. It is the year's most important occasion for focusing worldwide attention on the environment.

World Environment Day is one of the main ways through which the United Nations stimulates worldwide awareness of the environment and enhances political attention and action.

The European Commission is hosting a Green Week 2005 Conference and Exhibition, which will take place from 31 May to 3 June 2005 in Brussels. This theme for this year focuses on climate change.
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