

Bringing Plant-Based Nutrition into
Healthcare

Organisational Overview



2024-2026

PLANT-BASED
Health Professionals UK



‘The medical profession can help to move the needle by embracing radical change when possible — especially within our own ranks — and incremental change when necessary to promote harm reduction. We owe it to the profession, to our patients, and to the planet we share.’

[The American Journal of Cardiology doi.org/10.1016/j.amicard.2022.10.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amicard.2022.10.006)



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Executive summary



PLANT-BASED Health Professionals UK is a community interest company formed and led by **healthcare professionals.**

We are an education and advocacy organisation whose aim is to embed **whole food plant-based nutrition** into **healthcare curricula** and **clinical practice** within the UK.

We want to **empower individuals** and **communities** to embrace the power of a plant-based diet to transform their physical and mental health so they can thrive and achieve their true potential, whilst harnessing the co-benefits for planetary health.

We are fighting a pandemic of chronic ill health which is impacting our health and life span. We are spending more of our lives with chronic illness. Yet, the vast majority of the illnesses we experience could be **prevented** or considerably **delayed** by **adopting a healthy plant-based diet**, alongside other healthy behaviours. **Unhealthy diets are now the leading cause of death and disability.** In addition, the current food system is the **leading contributor to climate breakdown and biodiversity loss**, which in turn is negatively impacting our health and wellbeing. The UK diet has become one that is too high in ultra-processed foods and meat and vastly insufficient in the foods that promote good health; fruit, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds.

We have the ability to impact a number of our inter-related crises through food system transformation and widespread adoption of a plant-based diet.

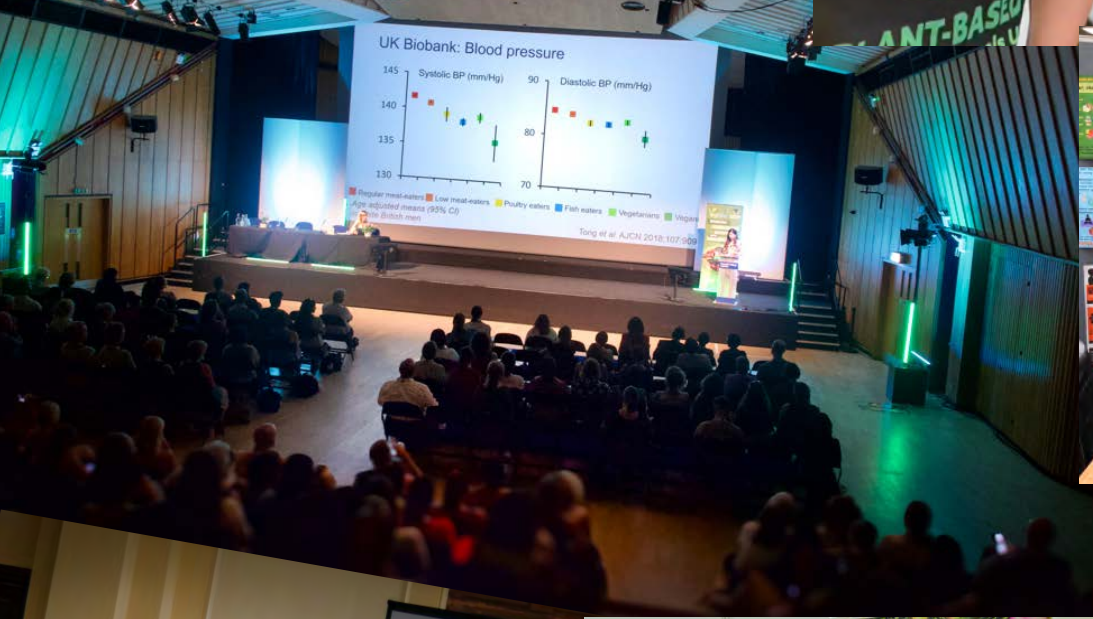
Our aim is to change the narrative on diet and health towards one that considers our own health alongside the health of the planet and the other animals we share this earth with. This '[One Health](#)' paradigm of healthcare has the potential to transform our food system into one that is just, equitable, healthy and nutritious for all and a plant-based diet is a key component of achieving this necessary goal.

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Registered as Plant-Based Health Professionals UK C.I.C. in England and Wales. Company no. 11363787, 147 Station Road, London, England, E4 6AG.



We are formed and led by healthcare professionals



Mission statement



Plant-Based Health Professionals UK provides education and advocacy on whole food plant-based nutrition for the prevention and treatment of chronic disease, as well as for supporting planetary health.



Our aims



To promote plant-based nutrition and lifestyle interventions for the prevention and treatment of chronic disease, as well as for supporting planetary health.



To educate health professionals and the general public on whole food plant-based nutrition and other lifestyle interventions.



To provide evidence-based recommendations for public policy on nutrition, diet and lifestyle.



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Our story



PBHP UK was founded in 2018 by Dr Shireen Kassam.

Shireen adopted a vegan diet in 2013 for ethical reasons but soon realised that a plant-based diet had the potential to **support optimal health and well-being and address a number of chronic conditions that are adversely impacting quality of life and overburdening healthcare systems**. Shireen spent four years studying and researching the topic and learning from pioneers in the field in order to bring this, as yet under-utilised knowledge, to UK health professionals and health services.

To gauge the interest in the topic amongst health professionals, Shireen along with GP Tom Hubbard, organised the [first UK health conference on plant-based nutrition](#) held in March 2018. This was a huge success bringing together as yet unconnected individuals and groups around the UK who were already using plant-based nutrition to improve the health of their patients and communities. From this, Plant-Based Health Professionals UK was born. Launching with a small team of volunteers, the organisation has grown in size, strength and influence.



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Diets centred around healthy plant foods, be it predominantly or exclusively, are associated with significant reductions in chronic conditions and a longer, healthier life.



Opportunities to influence within healthcare

Preventing chronic ill health and improving health outcomes

Unhealthy diets are now the leading cause of ill health and premature death both globally and in the UK.

Diets are too high in ultra-processed foods and meat and insufficient in healthy plant foods;

- **Fruit**
- **Vegetables**
- **Whole grains**
- **Beans**
- **Nuts and seeds**

Diets centred around these healthy plant foods, be it predominantly or exclusively, are associated with significant reductions in chronic conditions and a longer, healthier life. Addressing dietary risk factors provides the opportunity to improve quality of life and reduce the need for healthcare interventions, be it pharmaceutical or surgical. This in turn relieves pressure on our overburdened healthcare services.



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The food system is a leading driver of the climate and biodiversity crises. Without shifting to a plant-based food system, we will not be able to meet our climate and nature targets.



Addressing the climate and biodiversity crisis

The food system is a leading driver of the climate and biodiversity crises.

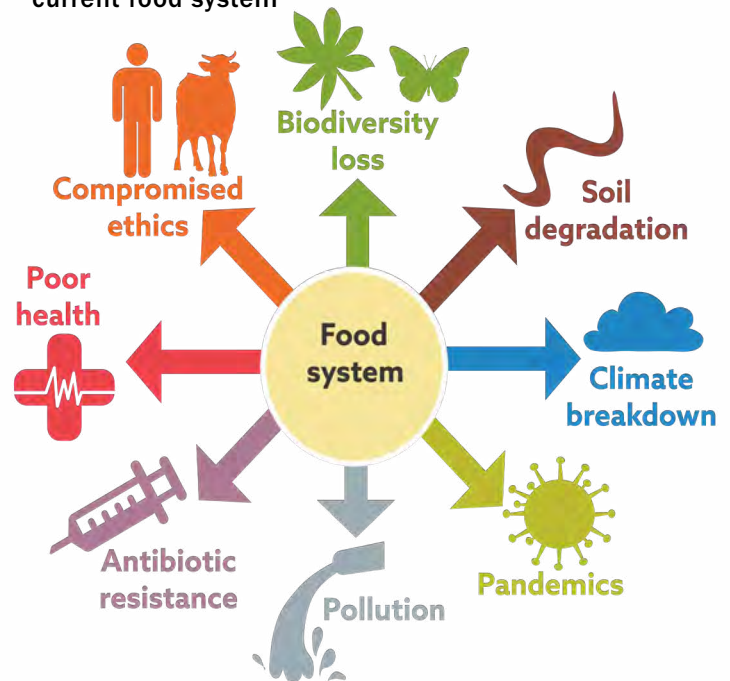
Without shifting to a plant-based food system, we will not be able to meet our climate and nature targets.

The NHS was the first healthcare system in the world to declare a **climate emergency** in recognition of the fact that the climate crisis is ‘the [biggest health threat facing humanity](#)’.

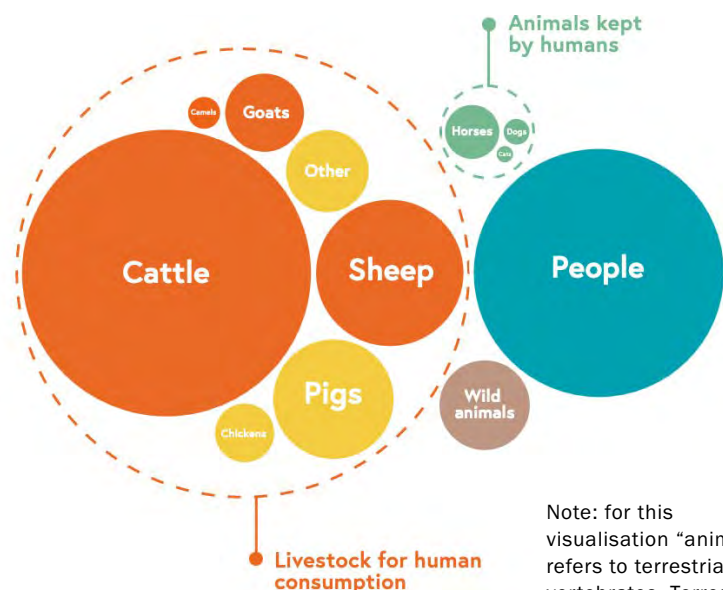
With over a million employees and 140 million meals served to hospital patients each year, switching to a plant-based menu could **‘reduce the food-related carbon footprint’ by more than 50%**. £633 million is spent on inpatient food provision, yet studies have shown that a vegan diet would actually cost a third less in the UK.

There are examples of good practice globally. All hospital meals in 11 city hospitals in New York City are now **‘plant-based by default’** with animals served only on request. **This has led to 60% of meals remaining plant-based and a 36% reduction in food-related carbon emission.** Hayat Hospital in Lebanon is the **first fully plant-based hospital in the World.** The Tzu Chi hospital in Taiwan serves only vegetarian meals.

The negative impacts of our current food system



Today, the combined weight of animals bred for food dwarfs that of the combined weight of all wild mammals and birds put together



Note: for this visualisation “animals” refers to terrestrial vertebrates. Terrestrial invertebrates and all life in the oceans are excluded.

[The National Food Strategy](#), Page 16



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To truly improve the health of people, we need to consider the health and happiness of non-human animals with whom we share this planet.



Implementing a One Health approach to healthcare

One Health is an ‘integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems’. To truly improve the health of people, we need to consider the health and happiness of non-human animals with whom we share this planet.

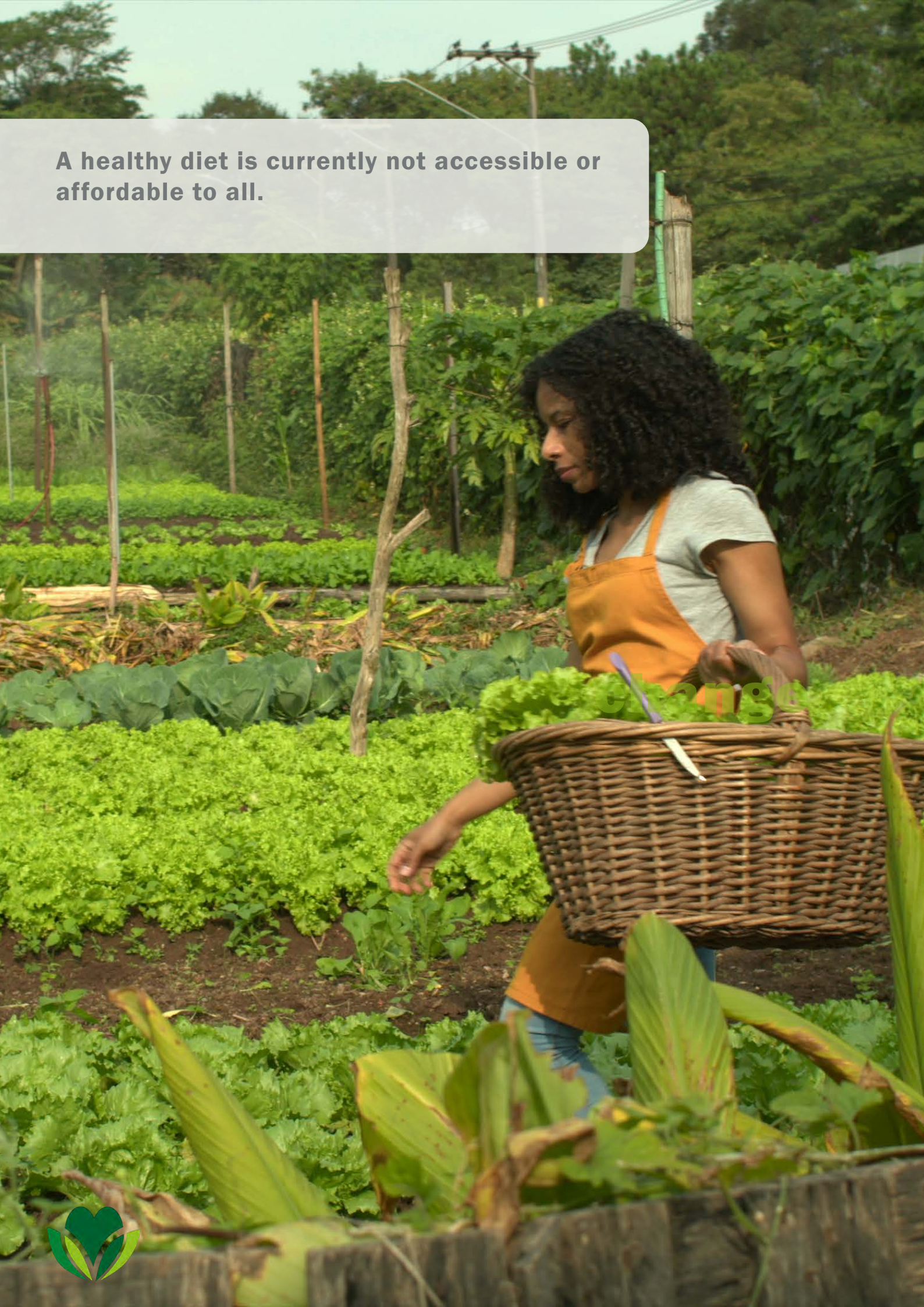
Our gross mistreatment and slaughter of billions of land animals and trillions of fish is leading to the destruction of our planet and adversely affecting our own health. Intensive factory farming of animals is leading to continued infectious threats with the next pandemic infection around the corner. The use of antibiotics in farming is increasing the burden of antibiotic resistant infections in humans and also polluting our land, waterways and oceans with antibiotic residue and resistant infections.



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A healthy diet is currently not accessible or affordable to all.



Health inequalities and social justice

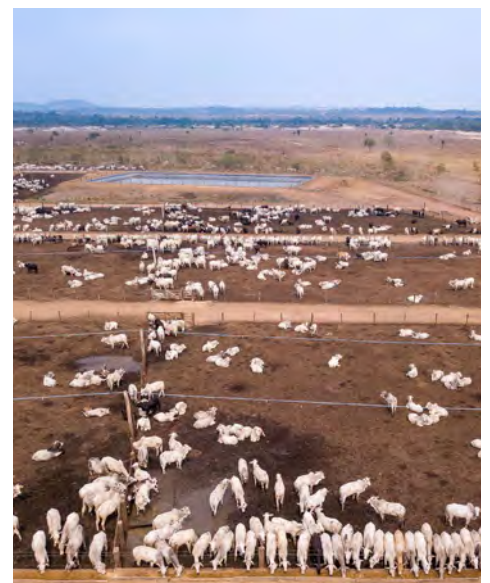
A healthy diet is currently not accessible or affordable to all. People on low incomes are unable to afford healthy plant-based foods. This is exacerbating inequalities in health outcomes.

In addition, the farming system itself harms humans. People who work in slaughterhouses are some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised in our society and only do so because they have very little option for earning a living wage. Prioritising a plant-based food system, moving subsidies away from meat and dairy to foods that promote health and wellbeing, and ending factory farming would improve the health and livelihoods of countless people and animals.



© picture-alliance/AP Photo/E. Peres

[Credit](#)



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‘Without decisive and urgent action, the climate crisis will increasingly undermine human health and disrupt healthcare delivery. There are both moral and practical reasons for health professionals to be at the forefront of climate action’

BMJ [2020:371:m3785](#)



Key work programme



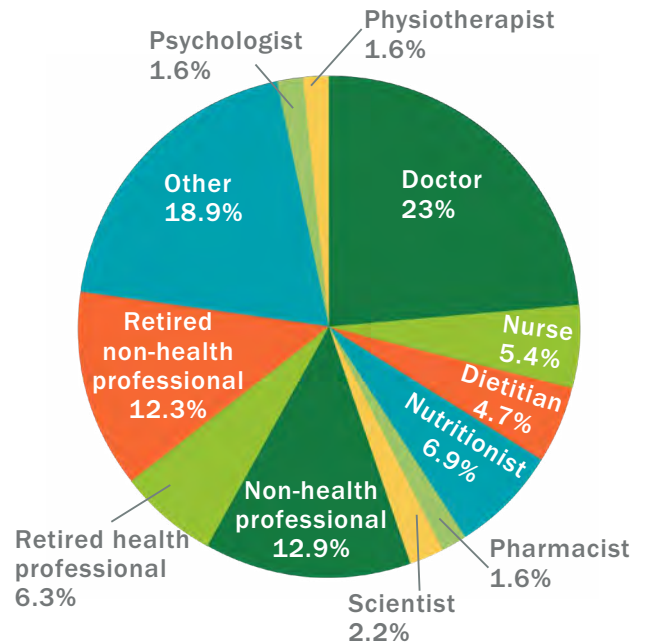
Membership

Who we are....

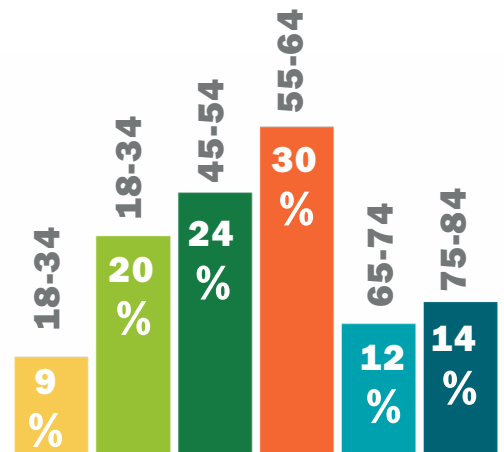
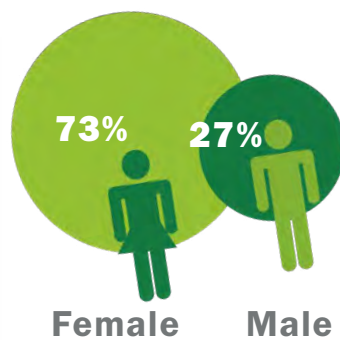
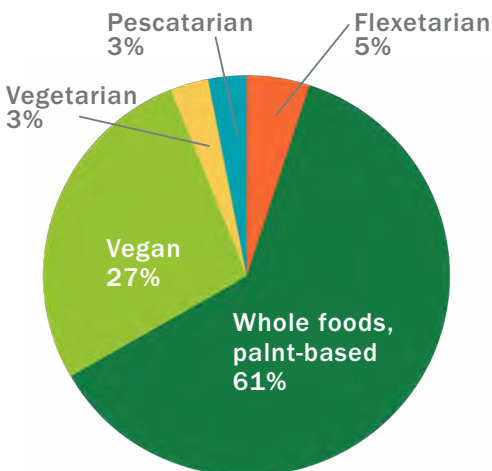
Our membership programme launched in January 2019 with the aim of bringing together a network of like-minded health professionals and individuals from all walks of life who are interested and committed in using plant-based diets to improve the health of people and the planet.

The ambition is to foster a community of well-informed engaged and confident advocates who can share the science and knowledge of plant-based diets in their personal and professional lives. As of September 2023, we are a community of almost 1000 members. In addition to in-person and online member events, we have an active private Facebook group for members with daily discussions.

We are made up of a range of professional backgrounds ...



We can speak 52 different languages



What dietary pattern do our members follow?

We span a large age range

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Education

We provide education in various formats.

This includes

- Articles and factsheets on our website
- Monthly CPD-accredited webinar programme
- In-person events and conferences
- Podcast (In a Nutshell)
- University courses and modules
- Numerous online and in-person talks at healthcare conferences
- Events for health professional, public audiences, the civil service and charities (BAPS charities, BME dementia services, Leeds, Made in Hackney, Yes to Life etc.).

Our approach is always to work within the conventional structures to create and deliver this vital education within healthcare curriculum and practice.



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Our educational successes:

The UK's first accredited university course on plant-based nutrition was launched in 2019 by Shireen Kassam alongside key contributions from PBHP UK team members.

The course remains successful after more than four years, with over 500 participants mainly from a health professional background. The course is recommended as part of the Royal College of GPs sustainable healthcare initiative - Green Impact for Healthcare Toolkit - and the Irish College of GPs - [Glas Toolkit](#).

We have dozens of [factsheets](#) that are widely used by healthcare practitioners and the wider public.

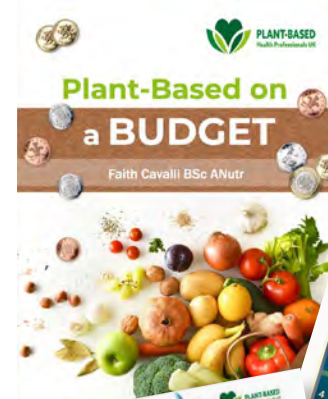
Three factsheets on plant-based diets and chronic kidney disease have been produced in collaboration with the BDA renal specialist group. This will bring plant-based diets for kidney health into mainstream practice given the large body of evidence that support the benefits. We maintain and add to our collection of [evidence-based articles](#) on plant-based nutrition with up-to-date scientific references. Our section for [raising plant-based kids](#), has been hugely useful for pregnant people, families and for those working in nurseries and schools.



UNIVERSITY OF WINCHESTER



Royal College of General Practitioners

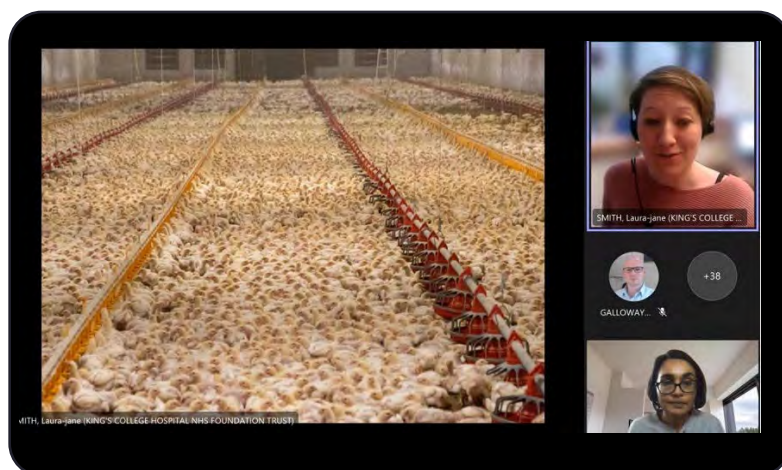


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Our CPD & CME accredited [webinar programme](#), born out of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and led by nutritionist and communications lead Rohini Bajekal, has been hugely successful.

It has delivered over 70 live presentations with the recordings available for our members. This has served to bring together a community of global plant-based health professionals and reach health professionals who are not plant-based yet but are interested in incorporating lifestyle and nutrition interventions into their clinical practice. In general, we have 200–500 participants for each webinar with an international audience of predominantly health professionals.



We deliver student selected modules at three medical schools (Exeter, Southampton and King's College London) called '[Cooking for the Climate.](#)'

Hayley Tait, GP, author and chef, teaches the students hands-on plant-based cooking while also emphasising the benefits of a plant-based diet for individual and planetary health. We also deliver a number of lectures for medical school modules on planetary, global and preventative healthcare.



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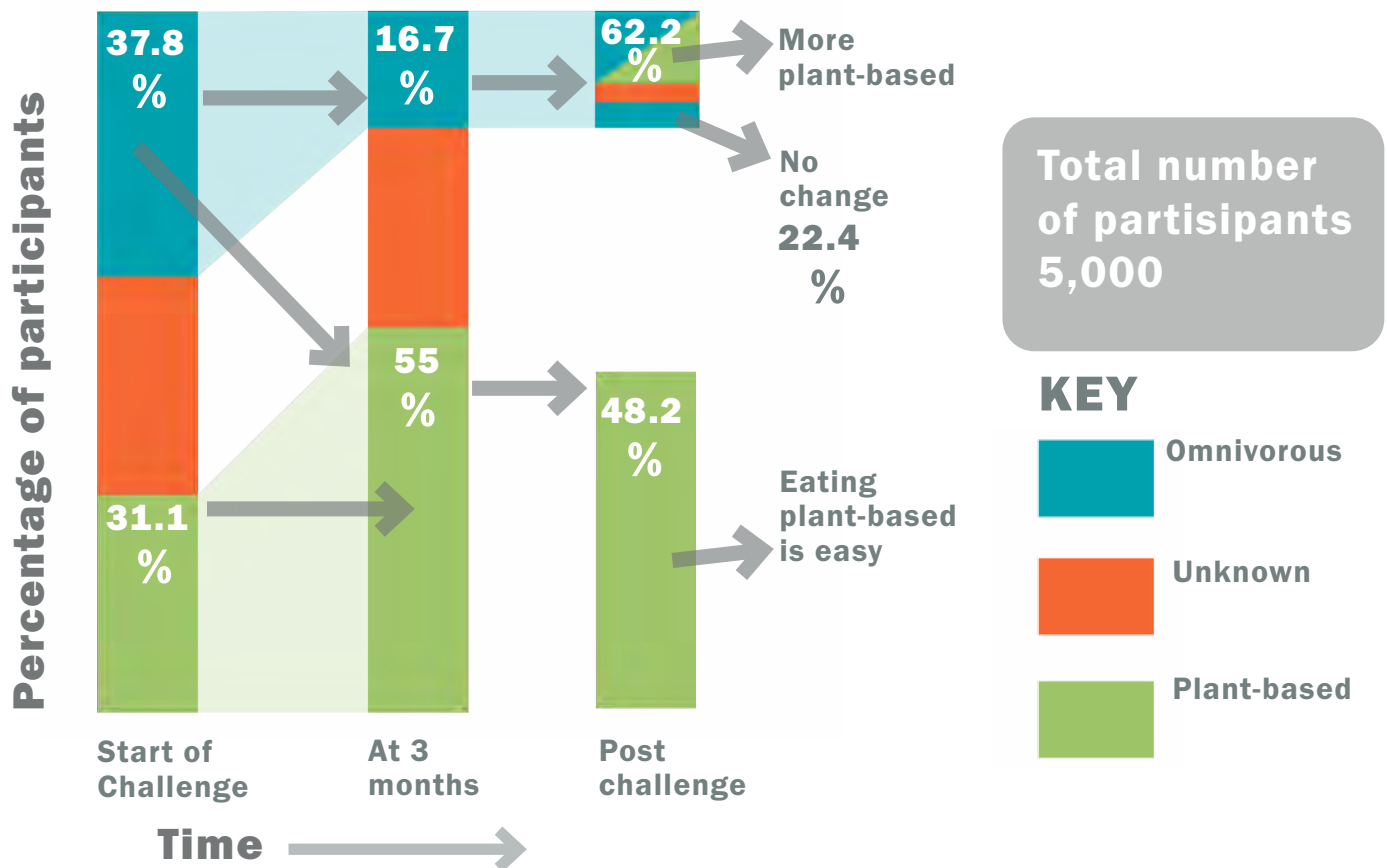
Our **21-day plant-based health challenge**, is a free email-based resource for people who need support to transition to a healthy plant-based diet.



21 Day Plant-based health challenge 

Since its launch in October 2020, over 5000 participants have signed up. 31.1% reported they ate a plant-based diet prior to the challenge. This increased to 55.5% at 3 months. **This increase came predominantly from the omnivorous group** which reduced from 37.8% to 16.7%. 62.2% of these respondents reported their diet was “more plant-based”, with only 22.4% reporting no change in their diet. 48.2% reported finding it easy to eat plant-based with the majority reporting they would continue.

Participant Outcomes - 21 Day PB Challenge



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We have produced a textbook for healthcare professionals, published in September 2022, called ‘Plant-Based Nutrition in Clinical Practice’.

It has involved PBHP UK members and international contributors and is an evidence-based textbook for incorporation into healthcare courses at universities and medical schools. This will be a valuable resource throughout the world.

Our conferences have brought together the plant-based health community with the aim of educating, inspiring, motivating and creating networks of good practice.

VegMed London 2023 was our first in-person conference since 2019 and themed ‘Bringing Plant-Based Nutrition into Clinical Practice. It brought together more than 250 people and presented evidence-based education on the role of plant-based nutrition in clinical practice, community cooking, public sector catering, healthcare education, planetary health and more. The atmosphere was palpably hopeful and has provided much needed support for the community to amplify the plant-based message within their networks and communities.



Educating, inspiring,
motivating.



Community cooking

Hayley Tait, GP runs a community plant-based cook school in Liverpool that provides weekly cooking classes to community groups including schools, women's groups, people from disadvantaged backgrounds, medical students and healthcare professionals.

Dozens of meals are made at each session which are distributed to the homeless and those who are food insecure.



Communications and PR

Led by Rohini Bajekal alongside Eden Green PR, we have secured extensive media coverage in the national, international and trade media raising awareness of the healthfulness of plant-based diets as well as their environmental benefits.

PBHP UK is now on the radar of several leading journalists and we are regularly featured in national media outlets such as the Mail Online, BBC News, Metro, Independent, Telegraph, The Times etc., with 100% positive coverage on plant-based diets and health to date. We are proactive in leading campaigns as well as tackling concerns that arise with regards to plant-based diets such as bone health in vegans.

On average, we are featured in between 12-20 media outlets every month, with an estimated reach of 50 million to 350 million



INDEPENDENT PREMIUM

How easy would it really be for the NHS to go vegan?

Health professionals are now referring to the removal of animals from healthcare as 'a moral imperative', especially when it comes to diet choices, writes **Dr Shireen Kassam**



Doctor recommends six food groups that could help reduce risk of heart disease by 25%



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Supporting the vegan community



Supporting the vegan community through knowledge exchange

Since our foundation, we have supported the vegan community.

This has included participation in [VegFest UK](#) events and using our member expertise to deliver health-related talks. Shireen Kassam is a member of the Vegan Society [Research Advisory Committee](#). We collaborate with the [Civil Service Vegan Network](#) and faith-based vegan organisations.



Supporting campaigns

We play a key role in supporting national campaigns led by mission-aligned groups.

We provide evidence-based education and knowledge around healthy plant-based diets. Examples include [Scrap factory farming](#) (Humane Being), [Plant Based Treaty](#), Plant-Based Councils (Animal Rising), Stop the supply of dairy (Animal Rising), Plant-Based Universities (Animal Rising), [Running on Plants](#). Our members who cover all four nations have actively participated in amplifying campaign messaging and providing their expert testimony.



Research

Our ambition is to contribute to relevant medical research in the field on plant-based nutrition.

To date this has involved two aspects - [medical publications](#), including case studies of our members, and research surveys.



Sage Journals

WILEY Online Library



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Policy work

We work with a number of climate active health professional groups to support their dietary position and policy statements. This includes the [UK Health Alliance on Climate Change](#) who represent over 1 million healthcare professionals in the UK and the Plant-Based Food Alliance. This is an area of work that we intend to develop as part of our advocacy strategy. A recent example is our involvement in the writing group of the [Biodiversity, Climate Change and Health](#) policy report from UKHACC. We are a member organisation of the Planetary Health Alliance. As a member organisation of the [PlantEurope Network](#) we have contributed to their ongoing work and mission, through panel discussions and member events. We are also a member organisation of the [European Alliance for Plant-Based Foods](#).



Supporting international organisations

We continue to support like-minded organisations in other countries where we can lend our expertise and support either in an advisory capacity, support for programmes and campaigns or by providing education. This includes the [Malaysian Vegetarian Society](#), Catalyst (Thailand), [Doctors for Nutrition](#) (Australia), [PCRM](#) (USA), [Reverse Factor \(India\)](#), [NutritionScience.In](#) and [Sampoorna Ahara](#) (India), [Langata Hospital](#) (Kenya) and [Hayak Hospital](#) (Lebanon).



Other important aspects of our work

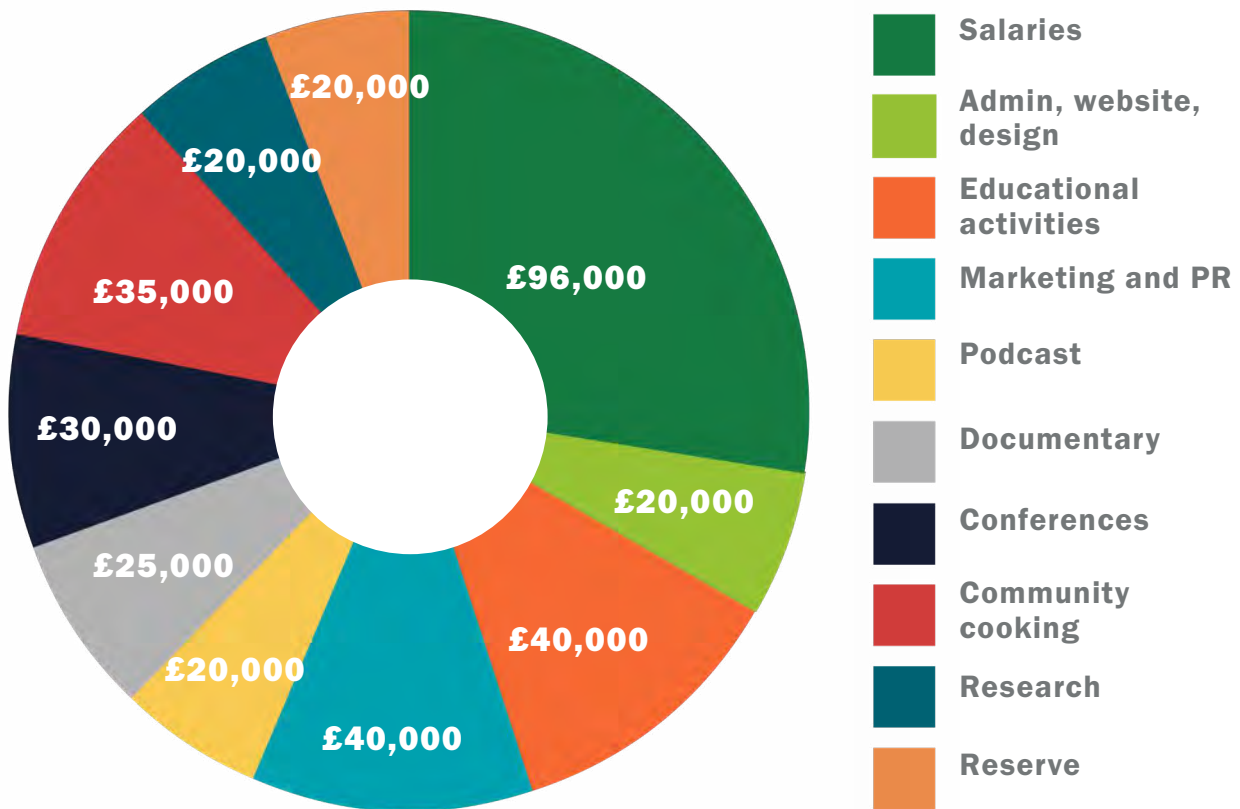
We support initiatives on sustainable food production and land management. Inclusion, integrity, diversity and equity are all hugely important to our organisation. We have developed [partnership and sponsorship guidelines](#) to ensure we maintain our integrity. We have worked collaboratively to produce a [DEI vision statement](#) that represents our goals.



[Plant-Based Health Professionals UK](#)

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Funding breakdown



If you believe in our work, we welcome donations to ensure we can continue to grow and achieve our aims.

Large donors and foundations

If you would like a 'no obligation' discussion about funding our work, please contact: **Shireen Kassam** plantbasedhealthprofessionals@gmail.com

We welcome regular monthly donations that can be easily set up as 'Standing Orders' via their bank, as well as one off transfers.

Bank transfers and standing orders

Cooperative bank

Account name:

Plant-Based Health Professionals UK C.I.C.

Account number: 65992810

Sort code: 08-92-99

For international transfers

IBAN: GB21CPBK08929965992810

SWIFT/BIC: CPBKGB22

Bank address:

The Co-operative Bank p.l.c. P.O. Box 101
1 Balloon Street Manchester M60 4EP

Recipient address:

147 Station Road, London, England,
E4 6AG



Our people



Founder and Director

Dr Shireen Kassam is a Consultant Haematologist, Certified Lifestyle Medicine Physician and Visiting Professor of Plant-Based Nutrition. She is founder of Plant-Based Health Professionals UK, a community interest company that provides education on healthy plant-based diets. Her first book, *Eating Plant-Based, Scientific Answers to Your Nutrition Questions*, co-authored with her sister Zahra, was published in January 2022. She has also co-edited the textbook *Plant-Based Nutrition in Clinical Practice*, published in September 2022.

Team members



Claire Lynch,
Dietitian and
Education Lead



Michael Metoudi,
Research Dietitian



Hayley Tait,
GP and Chef



Sian Roberts
Book club
lead



Rohini Bajekal,
Nutritionist and
Communications
Lead



Jay Cox,
Director of
Videography



Dr Sue Kenneally,
Advisor



Dr Laura Freeman,
Advisor



Karen Lee,
Events Manager



Dr Clare Day,
GP and Podcast
Host



Kate Dunbar,
Patient Advocate
and Graphic
Designer



Dr Daisy Lund,
GP and
Podcast Host



Isabelle Sadler,
Research
Assistant



Rosie Martin
RD, Advisor



Dr Miriam Martinez-Biarge,
Paediatrician and Advisor
on Plant-Based Diets for
Children

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Ambassadors



Dr Gemman Newman



Dr Alan Desmond



Dr Chidi Ngwaba



Kate Strong

People and organisations who support our work



[MAD Ideas](#) - website design and maintenance

[Vegan Accountants](#) - accountancy

[Eden Green PR](#) - media and PR

[Daswani Law Company](#)

[VeganFitness](#)



Our funding

Our funding comes from grantmaking philanthropic organisations



Keep up to date with our work

Website pbhp.uk

Facebook www.facebook.com/wholefoodplantbasednutrition/

IG www.instagram.com/plantbasedhealthprofessionals/

Twitter <https://twitter.com/plantbasedhpuk>

Medium shireenkassam.medium.com/

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‘The beauty of a plant-based diet is that you do not have to compromise between nutrition and your values. It is a diet that is best for people, planet and the animals.’

Dr Shireen Kassam



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