

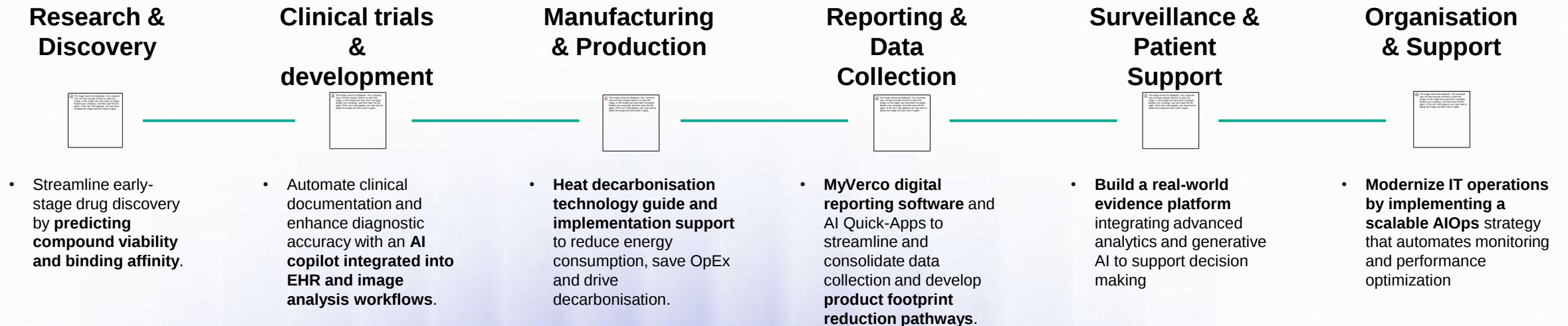
Sustainability and the patient care pathway

The idea resonates. What comes next?

BIP.Verco

Life sciences experience

BIP.Verco is BIP's organisational unit dedicated to helping companies turn sustainability into a core business capability and a driver of long-term competitiveness.



Beyond organisational boundaries

Three opportunities to drive sustainability impact across the patient care pathway



Think bigger than organisational sustainability

The choices available across a care pathway are only as sustainable as the options that organisations bring to it. A pharmaceutical company that has developed its manufacturing processes, a medical device manufacturer that has reduced the embedded carbon of its products, a digital health provider that has optimised its energy use, these are fundamental to any credible pathway-level sustainability ambitions.

Where organisations have direct control over their emissions, they should strive to be excellent as fully and as urgently as possible. The discipline of measuring accurately, setting targets credibly, and delivering evidence systemically within organisational boundaries is not in tension with system-level thinking; it is a prerequisite for it.

Understanding consequences is essential

Optimising one part of a pathway without understanding its upstream and downstream consequences creates risk. You could end up with a treatment that appears environmentally preferable in isolation but may generate significantly more healthcare resource elsewhere. This might take the shape of additional appointments, complications, or hospitalisations.

Pathway thinking changes what becomes possible

However, the most significant opportunities for reducing healthcare's environmental impact do not sit neatly inside any single organisation's boundary. They sit at the touchpoints across the patient care pathway: in the handoffs, dependencies, and shared decisions that define how a patient moves through the health system. Making the patient care pathway, rather than the individual organisation, the focal point for sustainability planning is not a change of focus; it is a change of how what gets measured, what gets prioritised, and what becomes possible.

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Building trust and breaking down silos

Data underpins organisational sustainability initiatives and a more sustainable care pathway. It is essential for closing the gap between our ambition and the actions required to realise it. However, the perfect dataset rarely exists.

Organisations face three data challenges

Organisations have to deal with gaps in their data, data platforms that don't connect data or allow for projects and pathways to be stitched together, and gaps in trust that prevent the available data being shared and used to its full potential.

Some of the most material gaps sit beyond the reach of any individual organisation's sustainability function to close. Foremost among these is the distance of granular data on the environmental cost of individual care activities. This includes the carbon associated with a primary care appointment (such as an ambulance journey, a test-day or a surgical procedure). Without this layer of data, pathway-level carbon analysis cannot move from concept to calculation.

Data sensitivity is a significant barrier

The structure of the value chain also compounds the data challenge.

Organisations across the sector are simultaneously suppliers to some and customers to others. The data that would enable a shared view of pathway-level environmental impact – granular information about processes, meaning, and resource use – is often the same data that reveals cost structures, sourcing decisions, and manufacturing efficiency.

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Making system level thinking work internally

There is no shortcut to moving from ambition to action. Progress and impact are built incrementally, through small wins that create stories and stories that create belief that change is both possible and valued. There are three ingredients essential to closing the gap between ambition and action when it comes to sustainability.

Strategic direction

Without a clear, board-level commitment to a defined and time-bound sustainability target, sustainability seems like a question about why particular investments or trade-offs are being made. Strategic direction provides a mandate without which everything downstream is harder to justify. But direction without accountability produces well-intentioned reporting rather than operational change.

Accountability

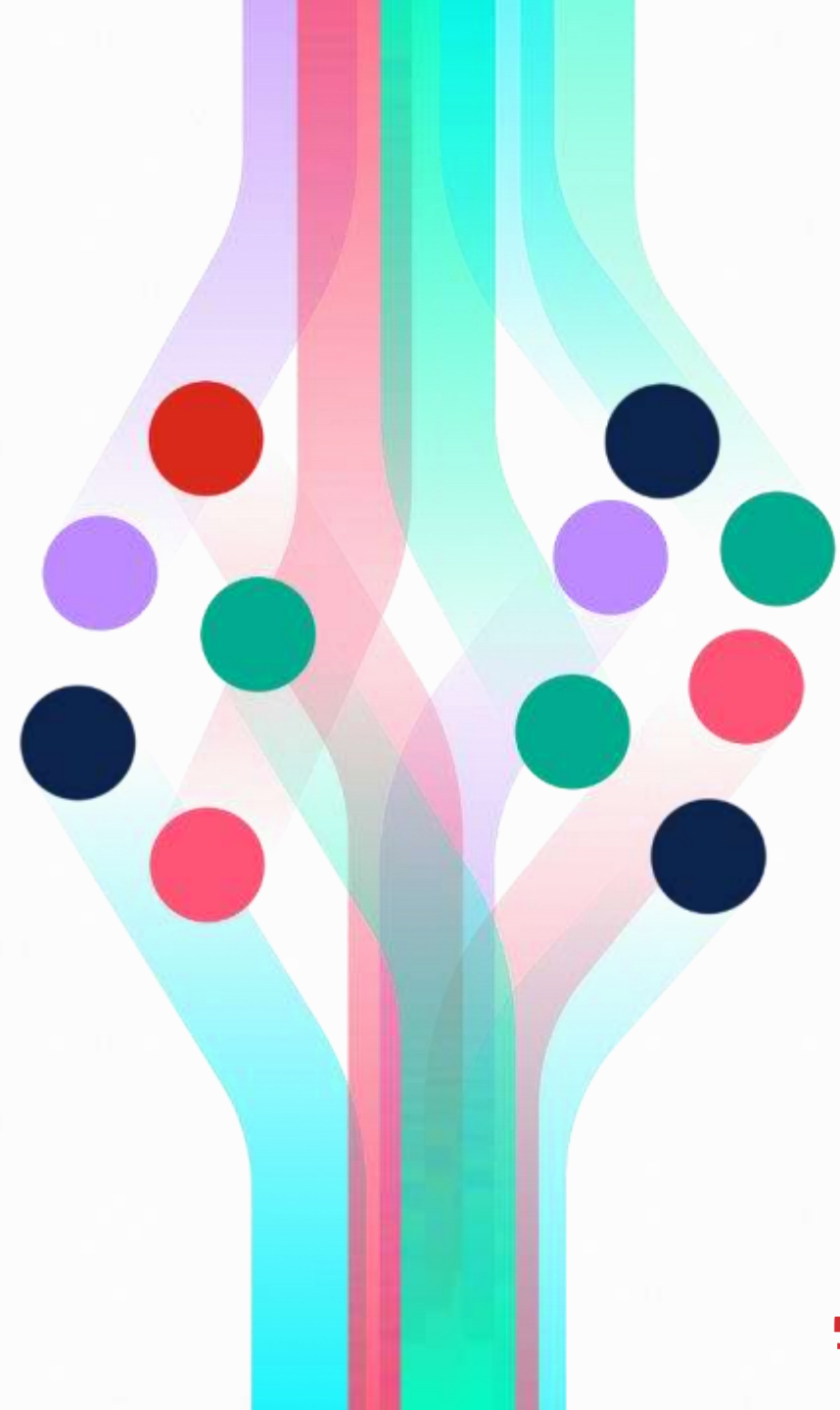
It is essential to position sustainability alongside the financial, quality, and operational metrics that govern performance. The sustainability team's role shifts accordingly: from organising to drive change single-handedly to providing the expertise, tools, and narratives that help functions succeed against their extended targets.

Engagement

Organisations do not change through targets and accountability structures alone. Creating conditions in which the most sustainable choice becomes the intuitive choice requires sustained internal communication, visible recognition of progress, and leadership behaviour that consistently signals that sustainable outcomes matter.

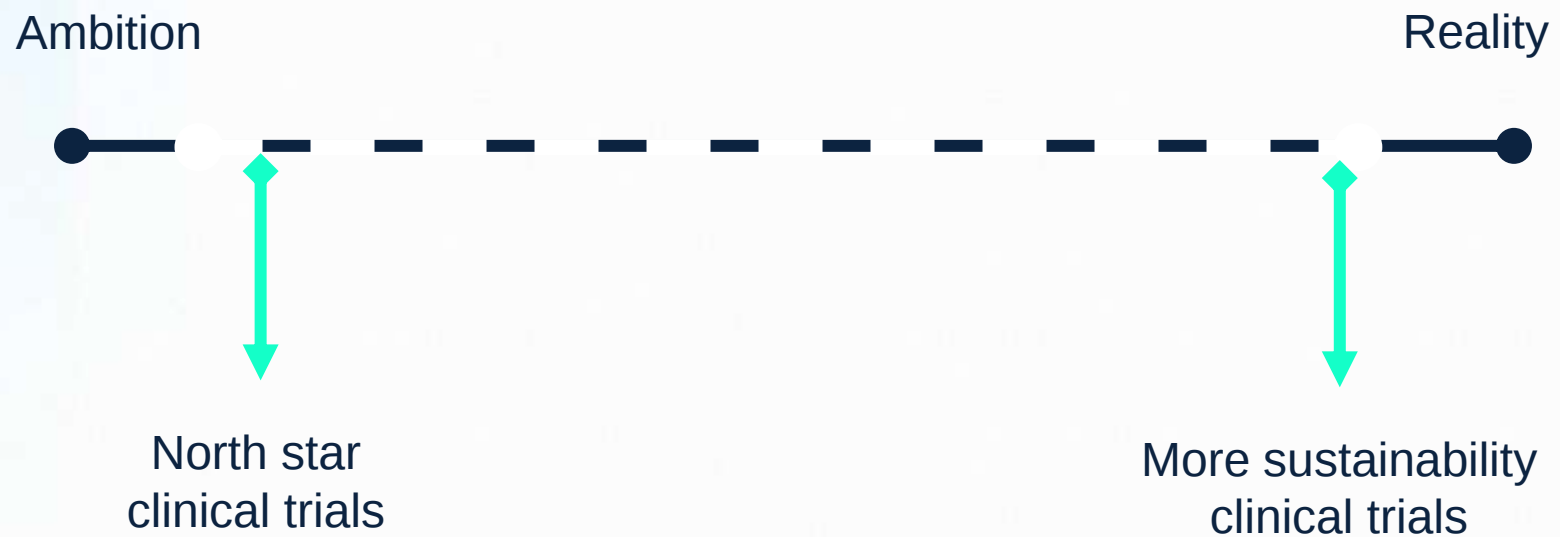
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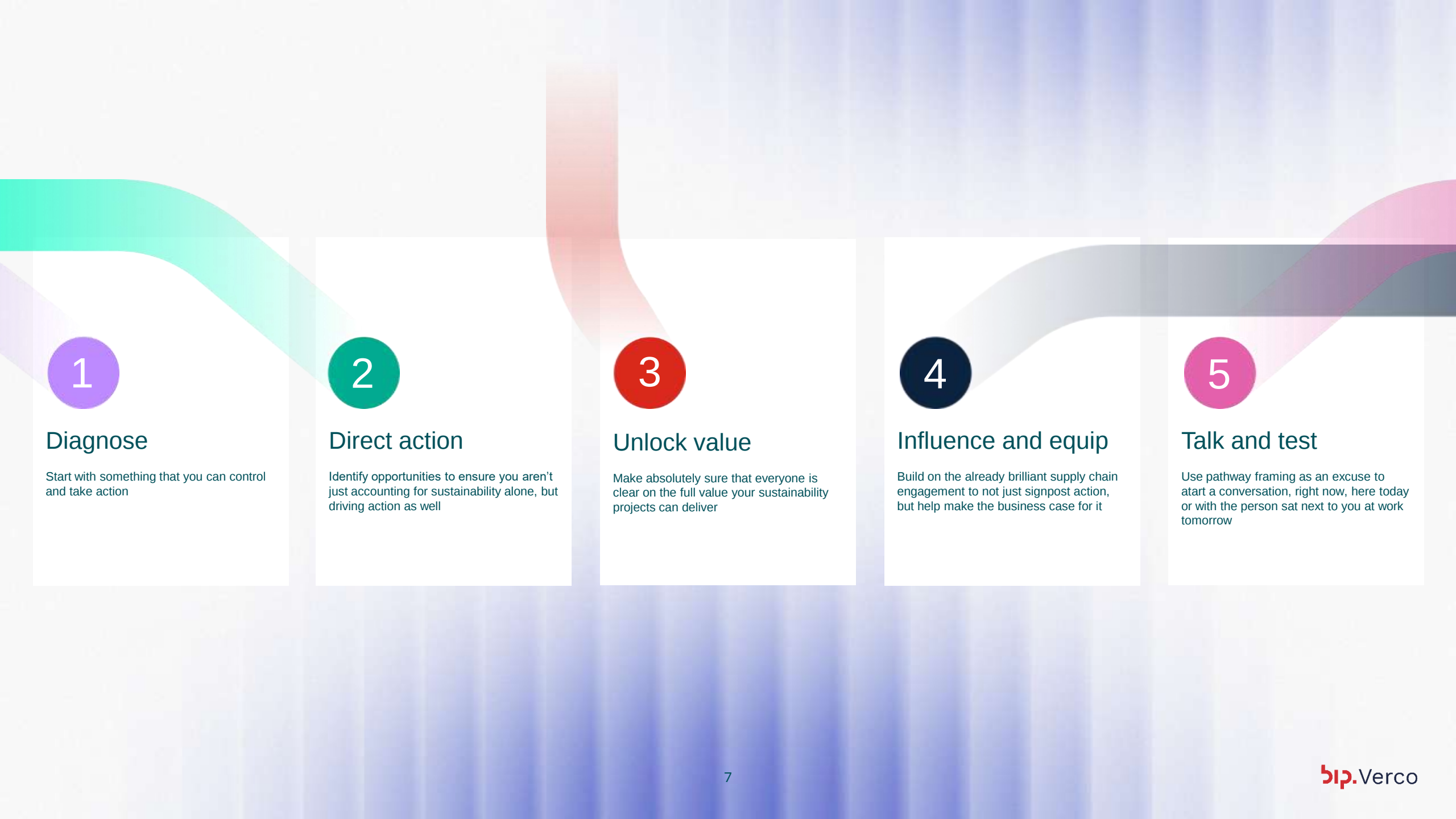
1. How can individual organisations improve patient care pathway outcomes through sustainability?
2. How can pathway thinking benefit sustainability teams and the sustainability impact of their organisations?



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1. **A voluntary movement.** Build the world your net zero target assumes
 2. **An emerging standard.** Draft Net Zero Standard ISO 14060
 3. **Procurement pressure.** NHS 2027 supplier requirements

Opportunity gap





1

Diagnose

Start with something that you can control and take action

2

Direct action

Identify opportunities to ensure you aren't just accounting for sustainability alone, but driving action as well

3

Unlock value

Make absolutely sure that everyone is clear on the full value your sustainability projects can deliver

4

Influence and equip

Build on the already brilliant supply chain engagement to not just signpost action, but help make the business case for it

5

Talk and test

Use pathway framing as an excuse to start a conversation, right now, here today or with the person sat next to you at work tomorrow

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