

Measuring the carbon footprint of inhaler use within primary care in Wales

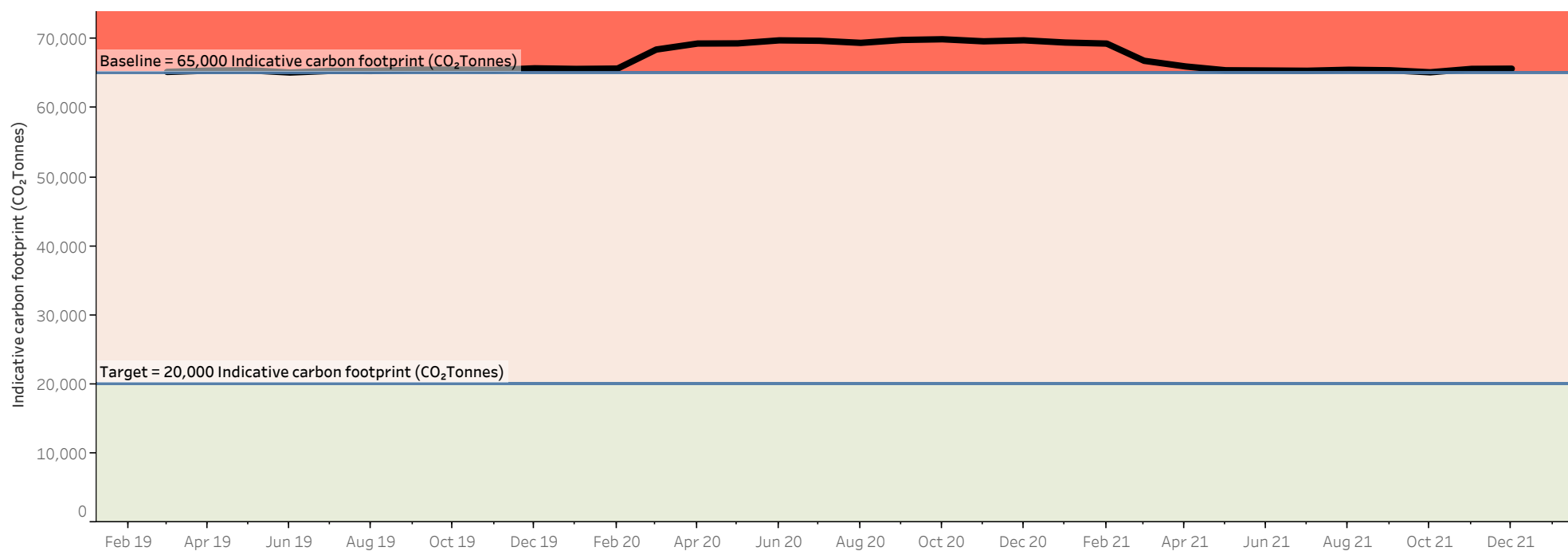
Introduction

The Welsh Analytical Prescribing Support Unit (WAPSU), the analytical unit of the All Wales Therapeutics and Toxicology Centre (AWTTC), has developed a dashboard to report on progress in reducing the carbon footprint of inhalers used within primary care in Wales. Currently these carbon footprint data are related to the use of the inhalers only. This report is intended as a brief summary overview of some of the key metrics provided within that dashboard.

Overall carbon footprint

The target as set out in the NHS Wales Decarbonisation Strategic Delivery Plan is to increase the use of low global warming potential inhalers to 80% of the total inhalers issued by 2025. This equates to a decrease in carbon dioxide (CO₂) to 20,000 tonnes per year by 2025; the equivalent saving of 5,600 airplane trips around the world every year. **Figure 1** shows total current annual carbon footprint based on the latest month's data as a rolling month annual total.

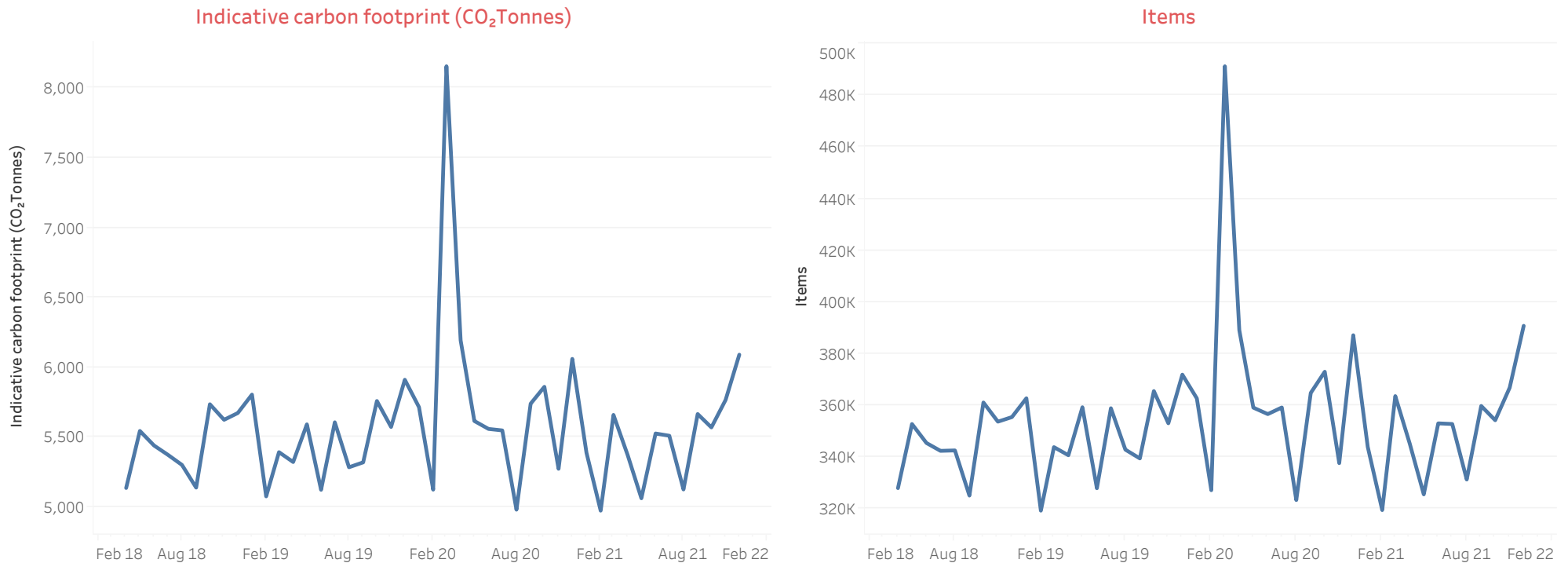
Figure 1. The indicative annual carbon footprint of all inhalers issued within primary care in Wales – data to December 2021



Key metrics

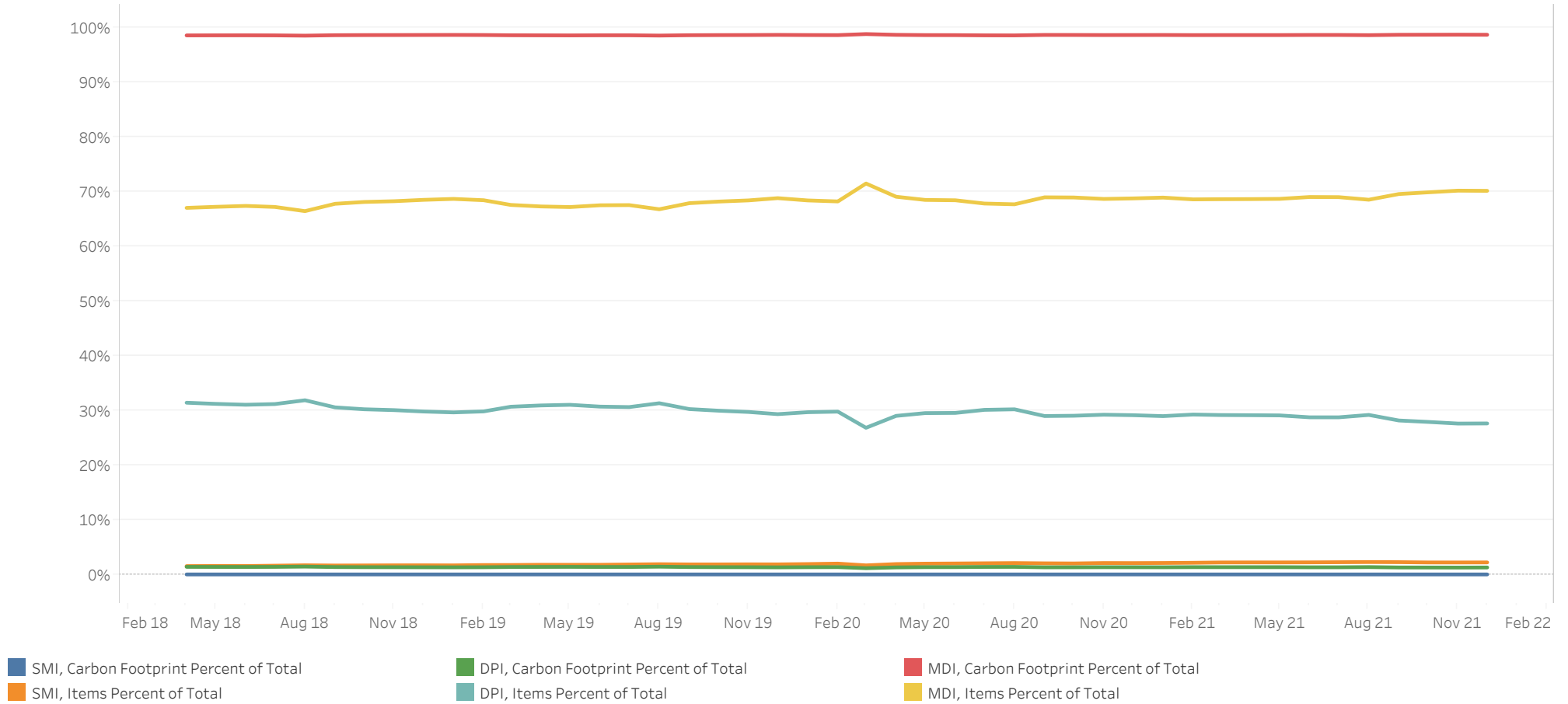
Several key metrics are reported on a monthly basis to support the stated target for reducing the inhaler carbon footprint. **Figure 2** highlights the indicative carbon footprint and the number of inhaler items issued within the primary care setting in Wales. The following charts show monthly data.

Figure 2. The indicative carbon footprint and item number of inhalers issued within primary care in Wales – data to December 2021



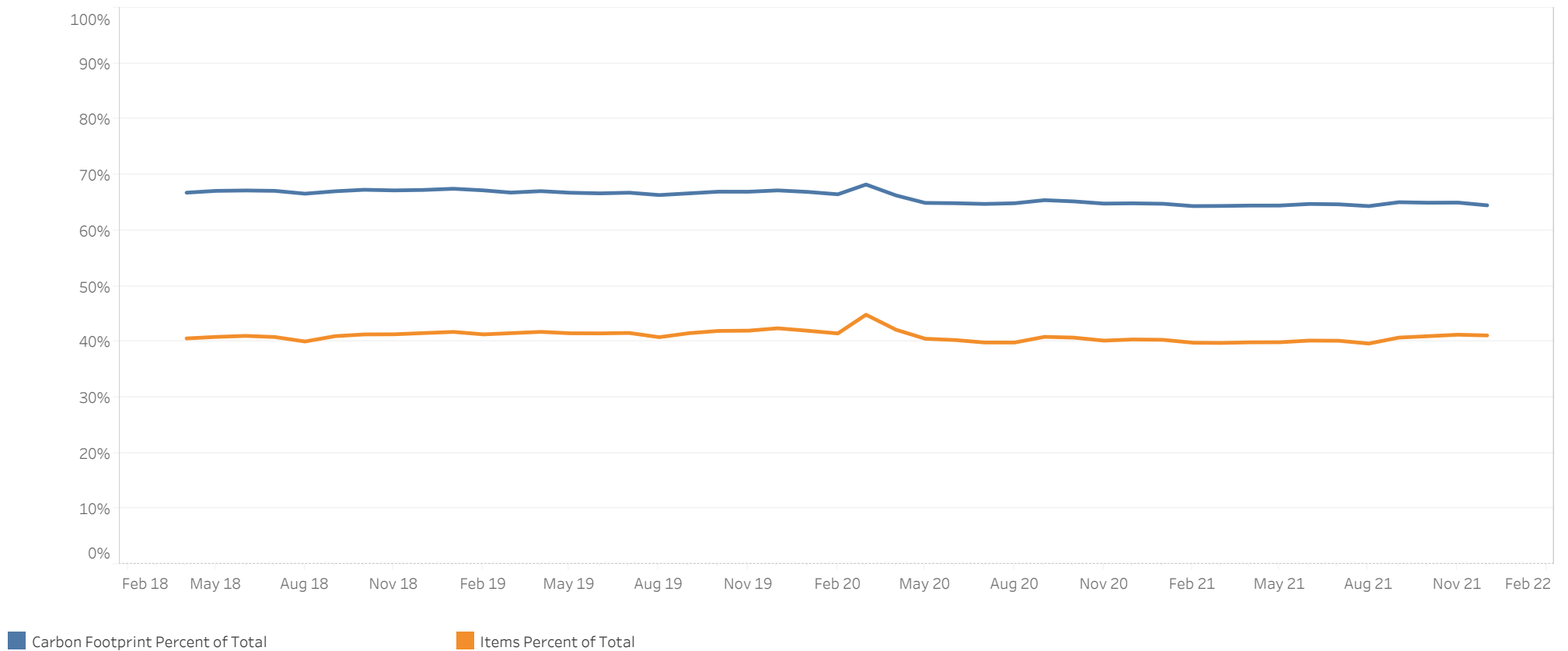
The recent All Wales Medicines Strategy Group (AWMSG) endorsed COPD and Asthma guidelines can support medicines optimisation by providing direction for inhaler choices. Metered dose inhalers (MDIs) have a high carbon footprint when compared to the other available inhaler types, namely dry powder inhalers (DPIs) and soft mist inhalers (SMIs). MDIs currently contribute nearly all of the inhaler carbon footprint. DPIs, and SMIs have a significantly lower global warming potential associated with their use. Therefore, a move to decreasing the use of MDIs, in favour of these alternative inhaler types should make a significant contribution to lowering the environmental impact from the use of inhalers. **Figure 3** provides a trend graph of the percentage of inhaler type by item number and carbon footprint.

Figure 3. Item number and carbon footprint associated with the use of different inhaler types as a percentage of all inhalers issued within primary care in Wales – data to December 2021



Short-acting beta-agonist (SABA) inhalers are intended for use in acute situations only. Therefore, regular use could indicate a potential under-optimisation of other therapies. The current All Wales Asthma guideline states that daily reliance on SABAs is associated with an increased risk of severe exacerbations and mortality, reflecting very poorly controlled asthma. **Figure 4** provides a trend graph of the percentage of SABA inhalers by item number and carbon footprint for all of the inhalers issued within Wales.

Figure 4. Item number and carbon footprint of SABA inhalers as a percentage of all inhalers issued within primary care in Wales – data to December 2021



To show change across comparative periods, **Table 1** provides the key metric data for the latest month and the same month of the previous year. **Figure 5** provides the main metrics in a graphical form.

Table 1. Percentage change in key metrics since equivalent month of 2020.

Measure	December 2020	December 2021	Percentage Change
Indicative carbon footprint (CO ₂ /Kg)	6,061	6,091	0.50%
MDI percentage of indicative carbon footprint (%)	98.68%	98.73%	0.05%
MDI percentage of total inhaler items (%)	68.79%	70.18%	2.02%
SABA percentage of indicative carbon footprint (%)	64.87%	64.51%	-0.56%
SABA percentage of total inhaler items (%)	40.40%	41.12%	1.79%

Figure 5. The indicative carbon footprint and item number of inhalers issued within primary care in Wales – December 2020 to December 2021

