

Changing climate, changing conversations

Climate change and health reforms



Healthy Communities Programme

Local Government Association
in association with

social care
institute for excellence



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Introduction

“Local authorities will take on the major responsibility of improving the health and life chances of the local populations they serve... These functions will be conferred on local authorities as a whole, rather than being functions of the health and wellbeing board.”

Liberating the NHS: legislative framework and next steps (Department of Health, 2010, p96)

Despite evidence to the contrary, climate change can still feel like ‘tomorrow’s problem’ – especially at a time when so much else is changing and local areas race to implement reforms to health and social care. With so much to do to develop new structures and ways of working, there is a danger that climate change will move down – or even off – the agenda.

But incorporating climate change into their approach and activities can help local authorities and new health and wellbeing boards (HWBs) to more effectively fulfil strategic responsibilities such as:

assessing need and tackling health inequalities

leading communities

managing risk

improving community resilience.

This short publication is targeted at local authorities, health and wellbeing boards (HWBs), commissioning groups and health services. It shows how a changing climate should be part of the conversation about new structures, responsibilities and ways of working. As some of the examples in this publication show, a relatively small investment now in strategic thinking and information gathering could make a big difference to the effectiveness of local actions.

This publication builds on a workshop hosted by the Healthy Communities Programme, Local Government Association (LGA) in association with Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) in July 2011. This looked at how climate change can be incorporated into the health and social care reforms (see page 15 for a list of attendees). Unless otherwise stated, the quotations in this document come from the transcript of that event. The workshop was devised and facilitated by Catherine Max Consulting and Ben Cave Associates.

This publication is written by Andrew Ross, www.fdconsult.co.uk, with expert input and guidance from Catherine Max.

Incorporating climate change into assessing need and tackling health inequalities

“A good quality JSNA has the potential to drive improvements, highlight health inequalities and closely inform commissioning.”

NHS Confederation (2011, p2)

“We’ve never seen health inequalities put as firmly in the frame of public policy as we have now. And we’ve never had such an opportunity to connect, through Marmot, to the big building blocks for health.”

Liam Hughes, National Adviser for Healthy Communities, LGA

“There is evidence that the pattern of development in some areas is potentially increasing vulnerability to current and future climate, particularly in relation to flood risk and heat stress.”

Committee on Climate Change (2011, p23)

The joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA) is the foundation for commissioning. The update to the white paper ‘Healthy people, healthy lives’ (HM Government 2011) was published in July 2011. On page 15, it sets out how JSNAs, together with joint health and wellbeing strategies, will:

“...set the local framework for commissioning of health care, social care and public health services, and taking into account wider

ranging local interventions to support health and wellbeing across the life course (eg local planning and leisure policies...)”.

Local authorities will use these ‘wider ranging local interventions’ to help reduce health inequalities. Tackling health inequalities also means tackling climate change. The public health white paper ‘Healthy lives, healthy people’ (HM Government 2010, page 39) reinforces Marmot’s finding that:

“...climate change is one of the biggest public health threats of the 21st century, with the potential to increase health inequalities”.

The white paper sets out some actions that can help tackle climate change and provide health benefits at the same time. These are:

- active travel to deliver low-cost health improvements and reduce emissions
- green spaces to improve mental health and the quality of community life, and offer some protection from the expected increase in heatwaves and flooding
- spatial planning to promote local ownership and occupation of public spaces
- behaviour change to embed new ways of sustainable living and working
- community projects to harness renewable energy and mitigate the effects of climate change.

The shift of public health responsibilities to local authorities presents a big opportunity for councils to devise ways of connecting health and wellbeing to all their activities – including urban planning, regeneration and transport.

For HWBs, this might at first amount to little more than influencing who sits around the table. But this will make an important statement to the local community about the importance of tackling the wider determinants of health.

Many HWB members will also be under an obligation to pursue sustainable development within their own organisations.

For example, councils have published sustainable community strategies, which are the responsibility of elected members to implement.

The Royal College of General Practitioners' Commissioning Competency Framework includes sustainability as one of its five principles of 'effective commissioning' (see 'Good sources of information').

Local responses

NHS East Riding of Yorkshire and East Riding of Yorkshire Council are developing their shadow HWB. This area is facing a very stark consequence of a changing climate – coastal erosion.

Tim Allison, Joint Director of Public Health, stresses that in this context:

“It's important to ground stuff in what actually matters to people – and what matters is people's houses not falling into the sea. Addressing those practical needs is one of

the most important things that partners can do to help the health inequalities agenda.”

Coventry's proposal to establish a HWB suggests that the board includes identified leads on the six themes set out in the Marmot Review, including 'creating and developing healthy and sustainable places and communities'.

[Proposal to establish a Coventry Health and Wellbeing Board \(PDF, 107 KB, 13 pages\) – on the Coventry City Council website](#)

Birmingham's Green Infrastructure and Adaptation Partnership is a subgroup of the local strategic partnership, Be Birmingham. It is focusing its work on the needs of the city's most vulnerable communities as they are more likely to be affected by extreme weather caused by climate change. Many adaptation measures will include providing a greener infrastructure, which could contribute to reducing health inequalities.

For example, building more parks in disadvantaged areas to help adapt to climate change will also provide people with more open space. This could lead to better levels of physical activity and less obesity. Increasing the number of street trees will improve air quality and reduce respiratory diseases.

[Birmingham: climate change and vulnerable communities](#) – on the LGA website



Bristol's JSNA 2010 update has a section on climate change and sustainability, which includes a commentary on 'peak oil'. (This is the time at which we extract the maximum barrels of oil globally, and from which point forward it becomes more energy-intensive and expensive to extract the remaining reserves of oil). The JSNA concludes that peak oil is:

"...a major issue that affects strategic planning for health". (p30)

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment – on the Bristol City Council website

The City and Hackney Health and Wellbeing Profile (the JSNA) includes a section on climate change. It identifies the main sources of carbon emissions in the area and also sets out the health benefits of tackling climate change.

Commissioning Strategies – on the City and Hackney NHS website

Leading communities

“The role of leaders and senior managers is clearly a key factor in creating the right conditions for sustainability initiatives to succeed.”

Evans, Hills and Grimshaw (2010, p33) for the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

“The strengthened role of local authorities improving health, through public health and commissioning, is a real opportunity for clinicians to work with councillors and officers to realise the co-benefits for health and the environment of action on climate change.”

Dr Robin Stott and Professor Sue Atkinson CBE, Co-chairs of the Climate and Health Council (personal communication)

Elected members are already democratically accountable community leaders. For people used to working in the health sector, the democratic accountability of local authorities will be a new dimension. HWBs cannot simply take an evidence-based approach. A political dimension will be a reality of their role.

This is where the experience of elected members can help. They will be used to grappling with the political uncertainties of

being community leaders, which can involve championing issues such as climate change, at the same time as representing local community priorities. Coming to terms with these dual roles will be a pre-requisite to getting community support.

Jonathan Carr-West from the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) urges HWBs to value this aspect of their role:

“It’s really important to see the benefit of connecting back to communities.”

The localism agenda is likely to shape and bend this community leadership role in new ways. Councillor Tony Jackson, Leader of East Hertfordshire District Council argues that, as well as representing local people, in future elected members will be responsible for:

“...connecting with many other groups – social landlords, constabulary, health – but we have to learn what this role is”.

Given the restricted number of people who will actually sit on a board, HWBs will need to find ways to connect to wider local networks if they are to understand the concerns and aspirations of local communities.

From a climate change perspective, this should include networks and organisations that may not be seen as having a ‘health and wellbeing’ remit, but which influence the ability of people to live healthy lives, such as regeneration, transport and spatial planning.

One of the best ways for councils and commissioners to show leadership on climate change will be through their own practices and finding ways to use procurement processes and strategic management to reduce carbon emissions and to prepare for the health impacts of climate change.

Local responses

Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust with support from Bristol City Council has set up Go Low, an innovative programme to reduce the amount of petrol that community health teams use. They are purchasing low-emission cars and electric bikes and encouraging team members to use them instead of their private vehicles to make home visits.

One team – the Bristol Vocational Service – is now ‘zero petrol’. It relies totally on an electric car and bike pool. None of the team members claims a mileage allowance. In 2009 the team won the West of England Travel Awards Employer of the Year. The council has also funded a workplace trial within its Health and Social Care directorate, which reduced overall mileage by 20 per cent.

Zero Petrol Project – on the LGA website

Go Low website

Birmingham’s Green Infrastructure and Adaptation Partnership work programme includes three key functions – risk mapping, contingency planning and future proofing – and nine themes. The partnership will complete key projects under each theme to identify useful, practical synergies and opportunities for innovative solutions.

Each theme has key sector support – including health through the city’s health and wellbeing partnership. This makes it a new innovative approach to tackling climate change and improving the city, the resilience of communities and the wellbeing of its people.

Hertfordshire’s study on the impacts of climate change on health and adult care services (see above) found that a significant proportion of adult care is contracted out to the voluntary and private sectors. The report recommends that the council should:

“...consider how its procurement and commissioning procedures, and annual reviews, could be used to introduce an element of climate risk appraisal, and to set minimum standards for adaptation”.

Hertfordshire County Council – on the UK Climate Impacts Programme website

A new health centre in Conisbrough, being built for NHS Doncaster, has:

- a green roof
- rainwater harvesting which for flushing the toilets in the building
- a paving stone foundation made from 100 tonnes of crushed recycled glass instead of extracted sand.

Press release – on the Community Health Partnerships website

Managing risk

“Increasingly we are framing climate change adaptation as risk management... if you don’t do it then it is going to be the kind of thing that keeps your chief executive awake at night.”

Alex Nickson, Strategy Manager, Climate Change and Water, GLA

“Many of the principles used in social care, such as risk assessment, harm reduction, resilience and the importance of early intervention, are equally useful when we think about the environment.”

Bradshaw, Sillett and Walker (2010,p31) for the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)

“Embedding climate change more fully into decision-making could reduce future adaptation costs, such as building new flood defences and maintaining existing defences, and also ensure that climate risks are appropriately balanced against other risks and benefits.”

Committee on Climate Change (2011, p8)

The idea that climate change is an environmental problem, and something only environmentalists worry about, is out of date. Climate change now stalks the corridors of power, from business boardrooms to Whitehall. Environmentalists now speak the language of good corporate governance and risk management.

Why? Forward-thinking businesses recognise the potential impact on their bottom line of failing to prepare for the consequences of climate change – such as an increase in extreme weather events. A rise in insurance premiums is a consideration for a start.

The public sector is under an obligation to act too. The Climate Change Act 2008 gives national government the power to require public authorities to:

“...report on how they have assessed the risks of climate change to their work, and what they are doing to address these risks”.

The Climate Change Act – on the Committee on Climate Change website

The act also requires the Government to do a Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) to understand the level of risk in the UK, including for health. The deadline for the first of these is 26 January 2012.

Local responses

'London's changing climate: in sickness and in health' is a guide produced by the London Climate Change Partnership. It is aimed at health and social care commissioners and providers, and covers how to integrate climate change into the design and shape of services. The report urges readers to consider making climate change adaptation "a routine element of risk management".

[London's changing climate – on the London Climate Change Partnership website](#)

Bournemouth Council has developed a climate change impact assessment tool to help service areas – including social care – to carry out risk assessments for climate change. They will be able to embed these risks into the existing corporate risk management process.

[Our Southwest website](#)

Hertfordshire County Council and NHS Hertfordshire Environment Group commissioned a study in 2009 to identify the impacts of climate change on health and adult care services in the county. As a result both organisations have been embedding climate change risk into everyday service delivery, decision making, policies, projects and planning.

[Hertfordshire County Council – on the UK Climate Impacts Programme website](#)

[Hertfordshire: tackling climate change through risk management – on the LGA website](#)

Similarly, Hampshire County Council established a Commission of Inquiry into the likely major impacts of climate change in the county, and how to build more local resilience to these impacts.

[Hampshire Commission of Inquiry – on the Hampshire County Council website](#)

Birmingham's Green Infrastructure and Adaptation Partnership is developing a practical risk mapping tool (BUCCANEER). This is based on climate and health inequalities data, and the likely vulnerability of local communities. It is due to be completed by early 2012. Data gathered so far suggests that poorer people are more likely to live on flood plains. Engaging health services in the work of the partnership has raised their awareness of the health impacts of projected higher temperatures.

[Birmingham: climate change and vulnerable communities – on the LGA website](#)

Improving community capacity and resilience

“Building resilience in people’s lives and their experiences of community is now key to modern social care. It’s also the key to adapting to uncertainty such as climate change, and makes this work topical and timely.”

Peter Hay, President, Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (personal communication)

As community leaders, local councils and HWBs can help communities cope with and respond to outside forces such as climate change. As David Kidney, Head of Policy at the Chartered Institute for Environmental Health, points out:

“Public health and climate change are the responsibility of everybody... so find ways to engage with communities.”

Policy is moving in this direction. The update to the ‘Public health white paper’ published in July 2011, says that the Government will give HWBs a “strong role in leading on local public involvement”.

It’s too early to assess the practical impact that the Localism Bill will have on how communities are involved in changing the way public services are delivered locally. However, Jonathan Carr-West, a Director of the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU), suggests that localism will at least:

“...give others outside the local authority system [a chance] to challenge the discourse... at least to have a different conversation.”

The capacity of communities to be able to get involved in this agenda is likely to vary enormously. Local authorities and HWBs should be well placed to understand their community profile by using tools such as the JSNA. They may also have an understanding of how to help vulnerable local communities get more involved in shaping life in their areas.

This community capacity is a prerequisite for building community resilience. Experience of extreme weather events has shown that the level of resilience is an important factor in the ability of a community to pull together and withstand difficult events.

There are important health dimensions to this. Increasing resilience and community assets is one of three ‘core protective factors for mental wellbeing’ used in the Mental Wellbeing Impact Assessment toolkit (Cooke et al 2011).

Local responses

Horsham District Council is engaging elected members and communities in climate change by focusing on severe weather events and the need to be prepared. The district expects a 60 per cent increase in older people by 2026.



Staff from the emergency planning, environmental coordination and community development departments are working together to ensure that the district has a good understanding of where and who the vulnerable adults are.

They are also linking up with parish councils to encourage them to devise practical ways of engaging their communities. Who, for example, will clear snow from the front drive of the rural GP's surgery? How can the local council help ensure that meals on wheels can continue to get to vulnerable people during severe weather?

Clare Ebelewicz, Senior Youth and Older Persons Officer at Horsham District Council, says that focusing on severe weather, rather than climate change, has helped to engage more elected members, parish councils and individuals. Extreme weather is:

"...something real. In the snow of 2010 delivery lorries couldn't get through to some places and one town, Storrington, ran out of milk".

The council will continue to implement its climate change strategy.

Horsham is part of Durham University's Built Infrastructure for Older People in the Context of Climate Change (BIOPICCC) research project. This is developing strategies to help ensure that the infrastructures and systems supporting health and social care for older people will be sufficiently resilient to withstand harmful impacts of climate change.

[BIOPICCC](#) – on the Durham University website

The 2007 floods in Gloucestershire caused widespread disruption and damage: three people died, around 4,000 homes and 500

businesses were flooded, and approximately 10,000 people were stranded on the M5 and other roads overnight.

Gloucestershire County Council's scrutiny review of the response to the flooding made 75 recommendations. Some of these related to how to support people and strengthen community resilience to alleviate dependence on emergency services and other public sector support.

Summer flooding emergency report – on the Gloucestershire County Council website

Also in response to the 2007 floods, Lancaster University undertook a study called 'After the rain'. This documented and investigated the process of flood recovery, especially the relationship between vulnerability, resilience and recovery. The researchers concluded that:

"...to build resilience for the future will require looking more fundamentally at the characteristics of contemporary social life and the vulnerabilities that society therefore generates, at how these are manifest within our built environment and reproduced through our institutional frameworks set up to respond to floods and other disasters".

Flood, vulnerability and urban resilience – on the Hull Floods Project website

Birmingham Community Alert is a hi-tech messaging service for all residents and businesses in the city. It provides emergency texts or voicemail messages during an emergency incident. People can also receive information on how the city is improving its resilience to major emergencies.

The automated message service is a partnership between Birmingham Resilience, Birmingham City Council, West Midlands Fire

Service, West Midlands Police and the NHS.

Birmingham Community Alert – on the Birmingham Resilience website

The Big Response was a pilot programme delivered by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), Green Alliance and Global Action Plan. It worked with four voluntary and community organisations (VCOs) whose activities focus on vulnerable people.

The aim of the project was to look at how best to engage this sector in climate change. Many non-environmental VCOs do not see climate change as being of significance to them.

NCVO has followed up this initial work with a project to help VCOs supporting vulnerable people in England to explore the implications of climate change for their work and beneficiaries.

Climate change case studies – on the NCVO website

Vulnerable people and climate change – on the NCVO website

Turning bad news into good news

“If properly chosen, action to combat climate change can, of itself, lead to improvements in health. The news is not all bad.”

The Health Benefits of Tackling Climate Change (The Lancet, 2010)

The potential health impact on all of us, but most particularly vulnerable communities, of a failure to tackle climate change, is worrying. That’s the bad news.

But as we have shown, the benefits of tackling climate change may include health improvements too. In practice, the decisions local authorities, health and wellbeing boards and commissioning groups make about how to incorporate climate change into health and social care reforms will influence health inequalities and health improvement in a local area. As this short document shows it can also help to promote community leadership, manage risk and improve community resilience and capacity.

And that news is pretty good.



Want to find out more?

References

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[SCIE Report 33 – on the SCIE website](#)

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[2nd progress report – on the Committee on Climate Change website](#)

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[Outputs – on the Hull Floods Project website](#)

Good sources of information

Energy efficiency is an area of considerable public investment, and space heating also contributes to the majority of carbon emissions for the UK, so it is interesting that delegates did not raise this as an area where the health sector can contribute.

For more information on energy efficiency, health and climate change the following two publications may be of interest:

Local Government Association – Warm and Healthy Homes – How Councils are helping Householders Improve the Energy Efficiency of Their Homes

This publication forms the Local Government Association's response to the Hills Review, and also provides a platform to showcase the excellent work that councils lead on to curb and reduce the incidence of fuel poverty. For more information go to: www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageId=18285

Marmot report – The Health Impacts of Cold Homes and Fuel Poverty

The Marmot Review Team was commissioned by Friends of the Earth to write this report which reviews the existing evidence of the direct and indirect health impacts suffered by those living in fuel poverty and cold housing. It makes the case for aligning the environmental and health benefits of reducing fuel poverty and improving the thermal efficiency of the existing housing stock. For more information go to: www.marmotreview.org/reviews/cold-homes-and-health-report.aspx.

SCIE Sustainable Social Care Programme

SCIE has been commissioned by the Department of Health to lead an innovative programme of work bringing together adult social care, health and sustainable development.

The aim of the programme is to encourage commissioners to promote sustainable development across the sector, particularly to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to climate change. For two written outputs see references above.

Sustainable Social Care Programme – on the SCIE website

LGA Healthy Communities Programme

This programme is funded by the Department of Health and brings together a wide range of projects and activities with one clear aim: to help local government improve the health of local communities.

Healthy communities resource – on the LGA website

Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) Commissioning Competency Framework

The RCGP Centre for Commissioning is continuing to develop its commissioning competency framework. This is an educational tool that indicates the range of knowledge, skills and attitudes required by every GP – whatever their past experience or role within a commissioning consortia.

It includes sustainability as one of five foundations for effective commissioning. And it describes sustainability as “a commitment to the sustainable use of resources, including the natural environment, NHS finances and the time and spirit of staff”.

Commissioning Competency Framework – on the RCGP website

Climate and Health Council

The Council includes doctors, nurses and other health professionals. It aims to:

- articulate and amplify the message about the need to address environmental and climate issues to protect health
- enthuse and connect health professionals – you and your colleagues – to take action to reduce emissions at home and at work
- consolidate the international health voice calling for effective governmental and UN action to protect health from environmental threats and climate change.

Climate and Health Council website

List of attendees

This is a list of people who attended the July 2011 workshop called Health, Wellbeing and Climate Change hosted by the Local Government Association and the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE).

Name	Position	Organisation
Alex Nickson	Strategy Manager, Climate Change and Water	Greater London Assembly
Angela Raffle	Public Health Consultant	NHS Bristol
David Kidney	Head of Policy	Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH)
Dawn Cousins	Cabinet member for Health Housing and Community Wellbeing	Isle of Wight Council
Jonathan Carr-West	Director	LGiU
Kay Russell	Strategic Planning Manager	Bristol City Council
Liam Hughes	National Advisor for Healthy Communities	LGA
Lindley Owen	Public Health Consultant	NHS Bournemouth and Poole
Louise Newport	Scientific Policy Manager Climate Change (Adaptation) Health Protection – Legislation and Environmental Hazards	Department of Health
Malti Varshaney	Public Health Specialist	NHS West Kent
Martin Seymour	Specialty Registrar in Public Health	NHS Suffolk
Neil Wood	Senior Public Health Development Manager	East of England Public Health and Social Care Directorate
Nicola Close	Chief Executive	Association of Directors of Public Health
Philip Insall	Director of Health	Sustrans
Richard Parish	Chief Executive	Royal Society of Public Health (RSPH)
Sarah Curtis	Professor of Health Risk	Durham University
Stephen Goulder	Director of Corporate Services and Workforce Development	Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE)
Tim Allison	Director of Public Health	NHS East Riding of Yorkshire and East Riding of Yorkshire Council
Tony Armstrong	Chief Executive	Living Streets
Cllr Tony Jackson	Leader	East Herts District Council

The Healthy Communities Programme

The Healthy Communities programme was created in 2006 and funded by the Department of Health, works to support local government in improving health and tackling health inequalities. The programme is hosted in Local Government Association and will be coming to a close in its current form in December 2012. The LGA will be continuing this work from January onwards, helping to support the role of local government with specific regards to the work of HWBs and the health reforms.

The Local Government Association

The Local Government Association (LGA) is here to support, promote and improve local government.

We will fight local government's corner and support councils through challenging times by focusing on our top two priorities:

- representing and advocating for local government and making the case for greater devolution
- helping councils tackle their challenges and take advantage of new opportunities to deliver better value for money services.

The Local Government Association (LGA) is an organisation that is run by its members. We are a political organisation because it is our elected representatives from all different political parties that direct the organisation through our boards and panels. However, we always strive to agree a common cross-party position on issues and to speak with one voice on behalf of local government.

We aim to set the political agenda and speak in the national media on the issues that matter to council members.

The LGA covers every part of England and Wales and includes county and district councils, metropolitan and unitary councils, London boroughs, Welsh unitary councils, fire, police, national park and passenger transport authorities.

We work with the individual political parties through the Political Group Offices.

Visit www.local.gov.uk

Social Care Institute for Excellence

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) improves the lives of people who use care services by sharing knowledge about what works. We are an independent charity working with adults, families and children's social care and social work services across the UK. We also work closely with related services such as health care and housing.

We gather and analyse knowledge about what works and translate that knowledge into practical resources, learning materials and services. Our work helps to improve the knowledge and skills of those working in care services. This includes managers, frontline staff, commissioners and trainers. People and their families who use these services also use our resources.

All of our work is developed in collaboration with experts - including people who use care services and their carers.



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