

Protecting and Promoting Health in a Changing Climate Report of the Director of Public Health, Communities and Prosperity

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

1) Recommendation:

- 1.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board considers the impact of the climate emergency on health and equity through the inclusion of climate and health impacts within the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and any future Devon Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
- 1.2 A first iteration of a climate and health input to the JSNA comes to the September 2023 Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 1.3 The Health and Wellbeing Board reviews, adopts, promotes action, and monitors progress on climate change mitigation and adaptation plans. The key plans are the Devon Carbon Plan, The Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Climate Adaptation Strategy, and the Greener NHS plans. All these plans present opportunities to create a fairer, healthier, more resilient and more prosperous society.
- 1.4 That the Health and Wellbeing Board considers signing the [Devon Climate Emergency Declaration](#).

2) Background:

The climate emergency is a health emergency. The UK Health Security Agency and the Faculty of Public Health both recognise climate change as the greatest threat there is to public health. We are already seeing an increase in mortality, morbidity and health inequalities as a direct and indirect result of rising temperatures, rising sea levels and the increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events.

There is an urgent need to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Through our collective efforts to transition to low carbon economies and lifestyles, and in adapting to the impacts of climate change that we are already experiencing, there are many health co-benefits to be realised. The transition to net zero presents a major opportunity to create more inclusive and sustainable economies, more resilient communities and to enable everyone to live healthier and longer lives.

The NHS and Local Authorities both have a legal duty to consider climate change when making decisions. However, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Health and Wellbeing Strategy has not, to date, explicitly included climate change considerations.

3) Proposal

Devon's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Health and Wellbeing Strategy considers the risks and opportunities to protect and promote health and reduce health inequalities through whole system action on climate change.

This has recently been included in the [One Devon Partnership Integrated Care Strategy](#) vision and ambition which outlines its support for:

“the co-ordination of carbon reduction across the system through the actions to reach net-zero outlined in the [Devon Greener NHS plans](#) and the [Devon Carbon Plan](#). The One Devon partnership also recognises the need to identify the key risks to our system from climate change and to develop a plan to adapt to and mitigate these risks”.

Actions such as encouraging everyone to be more active by walking and cycling, improving air quality through changes to energy and transport emissions and by purchasing products and services locally will all help to improve public health and support budgetary and other pressures on the NHS and social care in Devon.

This report:

- shares with the Health and Wellbeing Board an overview of the system-wide climate change adaptation and mitigation partnerships and plans and the greener NHS plans, and
- asks how the board would like to be sighted on and support this work.

3.1 Devon Climate Emergency Partnership

In February 2019 Devon County Council (DCC) declared a Climate Emergency and at the same time committed to collaborating with regional partners to develop a response. DCC led the creation of the [Devon Climate Emergency Partnership](#) which includes about 30 public, private and voluntary organisations.

The partnership prepared the [Devon Climate Emergency Declaration](#). This sets out an ambition to tackle climate change across Devon, Plymouth and Torbay and involve those people who live, work in and visit the County in addressing the challenge. The challenge involves reducing emissions to net-

zero¹ by 2050 *at the latest* and improving communities' resilience to the heating climate and the associated climatic changes and extremes of weather this is causing.

3.2 Devon Carbon Plan

Following an evidence-led process guided by an independent Net-Zero Task Force, the [Devon Carbon Plan](#) has been through an Interim version and various stages of public consultation, which included a Citizens' Assembly. The Plan provides a framework for achieving net-zero and contains actions for individuals, organisations, communities and policy makers.

It highlights the barriers that need to be overcome, the resources required (whether they are existing or have yet to be allocated) and where collaboration with national government is needed to do so. It divides action into five sectors and highlights priority actions within each: economy and resources; energy supply; food, land and sea; transport; and the built environment.

Of particular relevance to health and wellbeing are collections of actions that will achieve:

- The upgrading of existing housing stock (80% of the houses we will be living in in 2050 have already been built) to be more comfortable and affordable to keep warm and well-ventilated.
- A greater number of journeys being taken by active travel and a more rapid transition to electric vehicles. Planning for and providing neighbourhoods that enable people to access essential services within a short walk or cycle from their home is part of this transition.
- Enabling, supporting and encouraging communities to become more active in planning and delivering a net-zero future in their community via energy projects, repair and reuse cafes, share sheds, community ladders and wildlife schemes.
- Greater understanding of, familiarity with, and opportunity to choose a diet that is nutritious, sustainably produced and contributes to environmental recovery.

3.3 Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Climate Adaptation Strategy

Climate adaptation refers to becoming more resilient to the changing climate by anticipating the adverse effects of climate change and taking appropriate action to reduce the risk from its impacts (e.g. sea level rise, heatwaves, flooding, drought etc.).

¹ Net-zero is achieved when emissions of greenhouse gases from an area or an organisation are matched by initiatives that absorb the same amount of greenhouse gases, such as tree planting or seaweed cultivation, for example.

The Devon, Cornwall, and Isles of Scilly (DCIoS) Climate Impacts Group (CIG), currently chaired by the Environment Agency and coordinated by DCC, was formed in 2019 in response to declarations of climate emergency across the three areas. It was spawned out of the Devon Climate Emergency partnership and still reports into the partnership structure.

The CIG has prepared the draft [DCIoS Climate Adaptation Strategy](#). It is a strategic-level document. It comprises of three sections:

1. A Climate Change Risk and Opportunity Assessment (CCRA) split by sector - natural environment, infrastructure, health and built environment, business and industry, and cross-cutting risks. These sectors broadly correspond with the sectors used in the national climate change risk assessment, which was used as the basis for the analysis.
2. A Strategic Adaptation Plan, which sets out the conditions for everyone to act on adapting to climate change together (“Adaptation Plan”). It provides a set of strategic objectives and suite of strategic-level adaptation options that could be considered for regional collaboration.
3. An Action Plan, which sets out the priority actions for regional collaboration over the next five years, and specific actions for different groups: policy makers, organisations, community groups and individuals.

It focuses on climate impacts which require, or which would benefit from, regional collaboration. Due to the place-based and context specific nature of climate risk and opportunities, it is not the purpose of this Adaptation Strategy to plan the detail of how individual areas and communities should adapt. Instead, such detailed plans will be captured at an appropriate level depending upon the risk – it could be at county, district, community or parish level – some communities already have these for specific issues, such as the Slapton Line in South Devon.

The CIG recognises that it has an important role in supporting others to develop their own adaptation plans at a range of scales, from sectoral to household level. The Adaptation Strategy is intended to inform a programme of regional interventions to adapt to climate change, as well as catalysing place-based, grassroots, and organisational action on climate adaptation.

The draft Adaptation Strategy has been open for public consultation during May and June 2023. The final version of the Strategy will be published in the autumn and partner organisations will subsequently be invited to endorse it.

3.4 Monitoring progress of the Devon Climate Emergency Partnership

Delivery of the Devon Carbon Plan is overseen by the Devon Climate Emergency Response Group, which meets on a monthly basis and receives a report every 6 months about progress on delivering the priority actions. The Response Group will also oversee the DCloS Climate Adaptation Strategy activity in Devon, once the Strategy is finalised, and shares this role with the governance structures of the climate initiatives underway in Cornwall and the IoS.

An independent Climate Task Force is currently being established. This will meet quarterly and offer independent scrutiny and challenge to the Response Group about progress.

Projects being delivered in Devon that are contributing to net-zero and improved resilience are recorded on the website in the [Taking Action](#) section and promoted via a monthly newsletter and social media accounts which together have exceeded 10,000 subscribers.

3.5 NHS Devon Green Plan

In October 2020, the Greener NHS National Programme published its new strategy, "[Delivering a Net Zero National Health Service](#)". This report highlighted that left unabated, climate change will disrupt care, with poor environmental health contributing to major diseases, including cardiac problems, asthma, and cancer. The report set out trajectories and actions for the entire NHS to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2040 for the emissions it controls directly, and 2045 for those it can influence (such as the supply chain).

NHS Devon's 'Green Plan' aligns itself with the NHS Long-Term Plan. As part of the NHS, NHS Devon must play its part in reducing the environmental impact and carbon footprint of its operation. This inaugural Green Plan is a high level, strategic piece of work that should be viewed as a "living document". As the ICS and Integrated Care Board (ICB) develop, and work programmes become clearer, the areas of focus of this Green Plan will be developed, and sustainability will be seen as business as usual.

Secondary Care: Each of Devon's Acute Trusts, including Devon Partnership Trust, has developed its own action plan to feed into the wider ambitions of NHS Devon and the overall Green Plan. Across them, they cover the following key areas.

WORKFORCE AND SYSTEM LEADERSHIP

- Support our staff to become carbon champions.
- Encourage our staff to be green innovators.
- Create an environment that promotes a highly motivated, engaged green workforce.

SUSTAINABLE MODELS OF CARE

- Consider carbon reduction principles when delivering care across the whole system.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

- Increase the options for staff to work flexibly.
- Actively promote the digital option for our patients across the system.

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

- Actively support and promote travel that does not use petrol and diesel powered vehicles.
- Promote home working where possible.

ESTATE AND FACILITIES

- Purchase our energy supply from renewable energy sources.
- Ensure all new and future developments are green positive.
- Reduce gas, electric and water usage to cut carbon emissions.

MEDICINES

- Optimise the use of carbon friendly medical gases where possible.
- Prioritise the prescribing of lower carbon inhalers.
- Reduce the use of single use plastics.

SUPPLY CHAIN AND PROCUREMENT

- Apply the Social Value Act in all procurement processes.
- Buy locally where possible.
- All suppliers of goods and services to be aligned to the NHS Net Zero Target.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

- Offer healthier lower carbon options for all – staff, patients and visitors
- Buy locally where possible.

ADAPTATION

- Ensure we and our patients are prepared for future extreme weather conditions.

The Royal Devon University Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (RDUH), for example, has developed a Green Plan, covering the period 2022-2025. The Annual Sustainability Development report 2022/23 is included in these papers (see Appendix 1) as an exemplar of the work that is being achieved through Greener NHS plans.

Primary Care: A newly formed Devon Greener Practice Group, chaired by Dr Tom Waterfall, is meeting to consider how Primary Care colleagues can support one another with their greener NHS plans to mitigate and adapt to climate change whilst also promoting health and wellbeing through related actions and their trusted advice.

In addition to primary and secondary care organisations' individual plans there are three specific ambitions that specifically cover the Integrated Care Board: They are

- More Devon ICB staff will make greener journeys to work
- Devon ICB will be a paper free organisation by 2028.
- More products and services are bought locally promoting the concept of the Devon Pound across the ICS and its partners.

3.6 Air Quality: realising health and equity co-benefits of climate action

Poor air quality and air pollution is associated with several adverse health impacts including heart disease, diabetes, cancer, and mental health. Poor air quality is the largest environmental risk to public health in the UK. Additionally, air pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society. There are, for example, strong correlations with poor air quality and less affluent areas.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions through changes to power supply, transport, housing, and agriculture can all result in reductions in particulate matter and improvements in air quality. Appendix B gives more detail regarding the impacts of poor air quality on health and equity and the opportunities that exist to both improve health and reduce carbon emissions. The paper includes a recent consultation response on the government's **draft revised Air Quality Strategy**. This response was submitted by Public Health Devon with contributions from DCC's Climate Change, Environment, and Transport team.

4) Options / Alternatives

None.

5) Consultations / Representations / Technical Data

None in addition to those referenced in the paper.

6) Strategic Plan

The work of the Devon Climate Emergency Partnership and the Greener NHS plans aligns, as highlighted in the paper above, with all the key elements outlined in the vision and priorities of the Council's Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/strategic-plan>.

- Respond to the climate emergency
- Be ambitious for children and young people

- Support sustainable economic recovery
- Tackle poverty and inequality (address poverty, health and other inequalities)
- Improve health and wellbeing, including any public health impacts
- Help communities be safe, connected and resilient

7) Financial Considerations

Strategic and operational input does need to be resourced to ensure the effectiveness of the Greener NHS plans, the Devon Carbon Plan, and the Climate Adaptation Strategy. However, many adaptation and mitigation actions have a triple bottom line impact - saving money, improving health and reducing carbon. Not acting has potentially huge financial implications. Even in the short term, for instance if the health and care system is not well adapted to a heatwave, the financial and human costs could be very significant.

8) Legal Considerations

The organisations represented on the Health and Wellbeing Board have legal duties around climate change mitigation and adaptation.

9) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

Environmental impacts are a key focus of this paper and have been considered in the main body of the report.

10) Equality Considerations

Climate change will affect everybody in the County, and it will affect people less able to adapt the most. These include less affluent people, those living with physical and mental health conditions, those living in coastal communities or other areas prone to flooding and young people who will live with the effects becoming worse over their lifetimes. Responding to the climate emergency in partnership with the people of Devon will help minimise these impacts on everyone.

11) Risk Management Considerations

Climate change mitigation and adaptation is a key risk on the Devon County Council risk register.

All health and care providers may wish to review their climate readiness and consider their strategic and operational plans around climate adaptation and mitigation.

12) Summary

The Health and Wellbeing Board has oversight of the system-wide climate change adaptation and mitigation partnerships and plans including the Greener NHS plans and considers how the board wishes to be sighted on and support this work.

Name: Steve Brown

Director of Public Health, Communities and Prosperity

Electoral Divisions: All

Councillor: Cllr Roger Croad and Cllr Andrea Davies

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

Background Paper: Nil

Date: Nil

File Reference: Nil

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