

INTRODUCTION

The Climate Change Act 2008¹ requires public sector organisations to consider the risks posed by climate change and report on their preparation and planning for adaptation. For the first time, a comprehensive report for the whole of the health and care system in England has been prepared. A cross system approach was considered most appropriate because it provides greater insights into the state of climate change preparedness and capacity to adapt in this sector. It also means that synergies and barriers can be identified so that areas for further collaboration can be recognised.



Vulnerable people need to be protected from hazardous environmental conditions such as heat waves.



Ambulance services can be affected by extreme weather.

The report first outlines the risks resulting from climate change to the public's health and to the delivery of health services. It then describes an overview of the health sector's response based on information collated from existing data and bespoke surveys. Lastly the report highlights a number of recommendations for the system to take forward.

METHODS

The following parts of the health and care system have been considered:

- National Bodies representing health sector in England;
- Providers of NHS services;
- Family doctors, dental practitioners;
- Voluntary Sector (e.g. Joseph Rowntree Foundation);
- Clinical Commissioning Groups;
- Health and Wellbeing Boards.

The report was prepared by a team from all the above sectors, led by the Sustainable Development Unit (SDU).

Three elements are considered for each part of the health and care system:

- **Risk Assessment;**
- **Adaptation Planning;**
- **Impact/Evaluation of Adaptation Actions.**

Where possible other areas are addressed including:

- Opportunities;
- Assumptions and uncertainties;
- Barriers to implementation of adaptation plans;
- Useful tools, support, guidance.

A considerable amount of information is routinely collected by the health and care system and this adaptation report draws predominantly on these sources, also highlighting areas where key information is still needed.

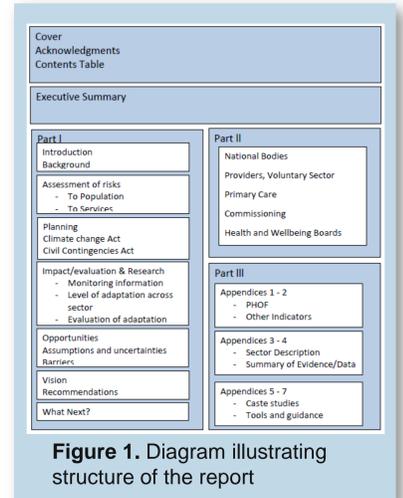


Figure 1. Diagram illustrating structure of the report

RESULTS

- Risks to health sector include those to health of population^{2,3};
- Risks to health infrastructure and the delivery of health services through changes in service patterns;
- **Headline risks include:**
 - > impact of **heat waves** and **overheating of buildings**;
 - > changing patterns of **air pollution**;
 - > increasing likelihood of **flooding** events.

- Effects expected to be **unequally distributed**;
- Health estate infrastructure is unlikely to be resilient to the changing summer temperatures (affecting some 90% of hospital wards);
- 10% of health care buildings in England are in flood risk zones;
- Impacts apply to partner services and supply chains which will affect the health of people and the health sector's ability to deliver care.

Risks	Plans	Impacts	Opportunities	Barriers	High level Recommendations
To population: Heat, cold and flood-related mortality and morbidity. Increase in vector borne diseases.	NAP obj 11 Heatwave Plan. Cold Weather Plan.	NCS Weather plan evaluations. National bodies and HWBB surveys.	Health benefits. Low regret actions.	Competing priorities. System fragmentation.	Support joined up working across organisations and local systems. Develop continuum from emergency responsiveness to longer term planning.
To services & infrastructure: Service pattern changes and business continuity	NAP obj 12 SD Strategy. SDMP. Health Building Notes.	NCS SDMP indicator. Good Corporate Citizen (GCC) sector surveys.	Cost savings. Systems approach.	Short termism. Finances.	Summary of local information into national intelligence. Monitor patient experience.

Figure 2. Summary overview of adaptation report content, risks and actions/recommendations

The health & care system from April 2013

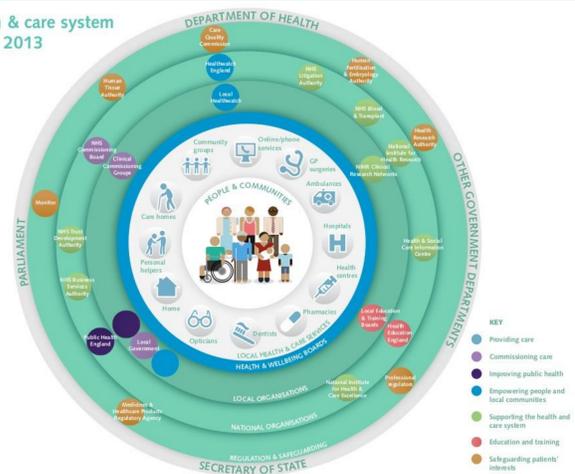


Figure 3. The health and care system

DISCUSSION

The health sector in England spends over £100 billion every year to provide services for a population of some 55 million people. It is the first health sector globally to issue a collective commitment to address climate change.

The National Cross System Group committed to supporting the implementation of the Sustainable Development Strategy for the NHS, Public Health and Social Care system, launched in January 2014. This includes reducing carbon emissions by 34% by 2020, embedding sustainability into decision making processes at all levels, supporting local leadership in attaining sustainable, resilient, healthy people and places and having regularly-updated extreme weather plans in place to deal with events such as heatwaves, flooding and cold.

As the health sector in England has made a joint collective commitment to address sustainable development and climate change, recognising that by doing so it can develop more resilient services and improve population health, it has produced a report under the "Adaptation Reporting Powers" provision of the UK's 2008 Climate Change Act. This first sector wide report, "Adaptation Report for the Healthcare System 2015", covers the majority of the health system in England⁴.

CONCLUSIONS

- This is the first health sector wide report of its kind and as such has been an invaluable exercise to determine the position across the sector, raise awareness and set a baseline for the future.
- The report highlights the considerable level of work carried out and helps ascertain the requirements to take the next steps forward.
- This report has confirmed that the health sector is moving towards better adaptation to climate change. There has been a useful collaborative start and the sector must now ensure that progress is not only maintained but improved upon.
- Working together with local authorities (who provide and/or commission much of the social care provided) is essential to understanding the risks and the impacts to develop a platform to support local communities and enable services to be prepared and respond well to climate change induced events.
- A future report can build further on this approach by developing links to local authorities and social care providers.
- An action plan has been developed and will be monitored by the National Cross System Group and National Adaptation Programme Steering Group.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Working Group: Kevyn Austyn, John Battersby, Angie Bone, Jacy Cesaire-McGraw, Anna Crossley, Mike Gent, Hazel Gleed, Leesa Herbert, Shelley Hugill, Alexis Keech, Kate Lonsdale, James Mackenzie, Kim Ormsby, Clare Swift, Imogen Tennison.

Additionally: Tim Ballard, Simon Briggs, Sally Burlington, Paul Cosford, Hugo Crombie, Brett Duane, Paul Harrison, John Holden, Andy Hollingsworth, Kathryn Humphrey, Robert Kenyon, Katharine Knox, Mike Long, David Maher, Mamta Malhotra-Sharma, Janet Maxwell, Robert Newton, Steve Purden, Tina Roberts, Ian Rowlan, Peter Sellars, Philip Tomalin, David Walker, Jeremy Wight.

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