

To: all health leaders

22 January 2008

IT'S TIME TO ACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE.

We the undersigned believe that climate change is *the* public health challenge of the 21st Century and that, unless decisive action is taken now, the world will face global public health and environmental catastrophe.

We believe that the health and healthcare community can, and must, spearhead a major movement for change. As one of the major organisations which will have to deal with many of the consequences of climate change, the NHS must use its unique position of power and influence, and lead by example in taking immediate action to promote sustainable development and tackle climate change.

The NHS is the largest single organisation in the UK, holder of one of the largest property portfolios in Europe and one of the biggest employers in the world. Its annual budget alone makes it ideally placed to harness its vast purchasing power to make a real difference.

There are many positive things happening within the NHS to reduce carbon emissions, but there is much more it can do. And, because it is directly responsible for the health of the population, it can provide a powerful example for other organisations to follow. The enclosed guide from the Faculty of Public Health, *Sustaining a healthy future – taking action on climate change* shows the many ways – including quick wins and longer term goals – in which the health and healthcare community in general, and the NHS in particular, can become more sustainable, and how we can help create a healthier, low-carbon future. It also shows that prioritising action on climate change and sustainable development makes good business sense.

Some effects of climate change are already with us, both worldwide and here in the UK, but they are just a taste of what is to come if decisive action is not taken immediately. Climate change and existing public health problems – and solutions – are inextricably linked. The effects of climate change in the UK, as described in the guide, could lead to even greater health inequalities. It is only through truly sustainable development that such inequalities can be reduced.

Please take the time to read this guide and to act on its advice, and support action to fight climate change by encouraging everyone in your organisation and partner organisations to do the same.

Sustaining a Healthy Future

Taking action on climate change



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