

PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

One of the FPH's 12 priorities in its Manifesto "Start Well, Live Better" refers to the evidence from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that an unsustainable approach to the future (including climate change) is one of the biggest threats to public health this century. Good health needs sustainable development – the idea that social, environmental, and economic progress must be attained within the earth's natural resources.¹

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals for 2030

- 1 No poverty
- 2 No hunger
- 3 Good health and well-being
- 4 Quality education
- 5 Gender equality
- 6 Clean water and sanitation
- 7 Affordable and clean energy
- 8 Decent work and economic growth
- 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure
- 10 Reduced inequality
- 11 Sustainable cities and communities
- 12 Responsible consumption and production
- 13 Climate action
- 14 Life below water
- 15 Life on land
- 16 Peace and justice, strong institutions
- 17 Partnerships to achieve the goals.

Definitions

The most widely used of the very many definitions of sustainable development is from the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987)², that it is "*Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*"

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)³ for achievement by 2030. Building on the principle of "leaving no one behind", the latest reiteration of the SDGs emphasizes a holistic approach. Progress has been uneven⁴ with conflict and climate change curtailing progress towards eliminating hunger, access to clean water and sanitation.

Earth's carrying capacity: The Global Footprint Network describes sustainable development as not consuming more natural resources than it takes the planet a year to renew. Currently, we need 1.7 planets to sustain our consumption and impact.¹¹

Synergies and conflicts between the UN Goals

Many commentators (for example the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research⁵), have noted that there are positive synergies between many of the SDGs, for example the demonstrable links between improvements in clean water, sanitation, elimination of poverty and improved public health. But there are also conflicts. One SDG stands out as being in partial conflict with several other goals - No 12 – "responsible" consumption and production. Improvements in well-being, economic prosperity, and lifestyles have so far taken place to a large extent through an increase in consumption and therefore caused growing environmental and material footprints. Breaking the link between increased carbon emissions and other environmental impacts and improved human well-being is the fundamental challenge of sustainable development across the world.

The **FPH resource on Sustainable Economy** highlights Kate Raworth's work⁶ on "Doughnut Economics" a visualisation of sustainable development, in which she brings together economics, health inequalities and environmental sustainability.



UK sustainable development strategies for the health & social care system

England: The “Sustainable Development Strategy for the Health, Public Health and Social Care System 2014-2020” – “Sustainable, Resilient, Healthy People and Places”⁷ (2014), from Public Health England and NHS England, developed by the Sustainable Development Unit, describes the vision for a sustainable health and care system by reducing carbon emissions, protecting natural resources, preparing communities for extreme weather events and promoting healthy lifestyles and environments.

The Sustainable Development Unit has co-authored a paper on how the NHS can support the UN Sustainable Development Goals (the Sustainable Development Assessment Tool) and developed a Social Value Calculator⁸ to help organisations meet the evidence requirements of the SDAT.

Scotland: Sustainable development is integral to the Scottish Government's overall purpose^{9,10} - to focus government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth. In the 2015 Review of Public Health in Scotland stakeholders emphasised the importance of public health leadership needs being demonstrated in Climate Change.

Wales: The “Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015¹² gives a legally-binding common purpose – the seven well-being goals – for government and public bodies. The “Sustainable Development Principle” highlights how the goals and actions arising from the Act will be delivered, through long-term thinking, prevention, integration, collaboration and involvement. A Future Generations commissioner role has been established with a range of national indicators to measure progress.^{13,14}

Northern Ireland: Sustainable development was written into Northern Ireland (NI) legislation under Section 25 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006. As a consequence, the principles of sustainable development are embedded in the NI Executive's draft Programme for Government (PfG), the highest level strategic document of the NI Executive. A mapping exercise demonstrated that the outcomes and indicators in the PfG could be correlated to 16 out of the 17 SDGs. As part of the commitment to open government the resulting document was published in December 2018¹⁵.

References

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9. Scottish Government Economic Strategy 2011

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Environment/SustainableDevelopment/7368>

10. Scottish Government 2016 <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0049/00493925.pdf>

11. Global Footprint Network <https://www.footprintnetwork.org/our-work/earth-overshoot-day/> Accessed 2.1.19

12. Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Welsh Government website [accessed 07.07.19]

13. Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, website [accessed 07.07.2019]

14. National Indicators, Welsh Government website [accessed 07.07.2019]

15. SDG mapping exercise: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/united-nations-sustainable-development-goals>

Professional Development Questions

1 Research which of the Sustainable Development Goals have made most progress towards achievement

2 Summarise the synergies and conflicts between the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals

FPH General CPD Questions

1. What did I learn from this activity or event?

2. How am I going to apply this learning in my work?

3. What am I going to do in future to further develop this learning and/or meet any gaps in my knowledge, skills or understanding?