

Health Security – The Climate and Ecological Crisis



**FACULTY OF
PUBLIC HEALTH**

Overview

The climate and ecological emergency we currently face is the greatest threat to health ever faced by humanity. Governments across the world must come together to take urgent and purposeful action to protect human and planetary health.

The detrimental health impacts of the climate and ecological crises are already visible in the UK and globally. During summer (2022), drought and flash flooding across the UK and Europe had a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of communities. In the UK, it was estimated that the heat waves accounted for over 1,000 excess deaths. Without concerted and intersectoral action, there will be further avoidable increases in morbidity and mortality as we trigger multiple climate tipping points (1).

FPH work and policy position

Ongoing advocacy around the climate and ecological crises is at the core of the FPH's mission, not only because of the dire consequences of climate change on population health - particularly for the most vulnerable at national and global level - but also because adaptation and mitigation strategies have health co-benefits (2).

Economic and social policies to tackle the climate emergency will also substantially improve population health. Policies to tackle water pollution, improve biodiversity and reduce emissions will in turn lead to better diets, more physical activity, and increased social capital. If appropriately implemented, these strategies have the potential to reduce health inequalities by ensuring that support is commensurate to need and placing equity and sustainability at the foundation of future policy.

Current and proposed policies in the UK

The FPH welcomes the UK's ambitious emissions targets which are in line with the long-term temperature goal of the Paris Agreement. However, the Climate Change Committee's 2022 Progress Report reveals that the Government is failing in much of its implementation (3).

FPH policy recommendations

As a credible and respected voice on the health impacts of the climate and ecological emergencies, FPH is in a unique position to advise on strategies to protect and promote the health and wellbeing of current and future generations (4). FPH urges the UK government to adopt the following recommendations:

1. Implement measures to limit greenhouse gas emissions. FPH urges the UK government to take immediate action to limit global warming to 1.5°C, by accelerating the transition from fossil fuels to renewable energies; shifting to low-carbon transport systems (e.g. active travel, public transport, and zero emissions vehicles); and transitioning to sustainable, affordable plant-based diets.
2. Embed consideration of the impact of climate change on health in all policies and reinforce co-benefits of mitigation and adaptation strategies, so that action on climate change protects both planetary and population health. It is our responsibility to enable everyone worldwide to live a healthy and fulfilling life within planetary boundaries to avoid compromising the lives of future generations.
3. Increase access to green and blue space for health and wellbeing, and support measures to increase biodiversity across the UK. The climate emergency is further compounded by an ecological emergency. FPH calls on the government to take action to protect, preserve and recover our ecosystems both nationally and internationally. For example, preventing water companies from contaminating water basins and rivers with untreated sewage requires swift and definitive action.

References

Please visit <https://bit.ly/3Lzs8Xn> for a complete list of references.