

Climate Change in Wales: Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

Liz Green,
Public Health Wales



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Iechyd Cyhoeddus
Cymru
Public Health
Wales



Aims of the Climate Change Health Impact Assessment in Wales

To identify the potential health and well-being impacts of climate change in Wales - whether physical, mental or social

- To identify how climate change will **affect people's lives where they live, work and play, what does it mean?**
- Focus on impacts on the **social determinants of health, population groups** affected and **inequalities**
- Provide an **evidence** base to inform adaptation the **integration** of health and wellbeing into **adaptation planning and policy**
- To support organisations and decision makers in Wales and **inform plans, policies and programmes**

Overview of the HIA

- Scope - Wales only; comprehensive / complex; **participatory**; assesses potential and actual impact. Disrupted due to pandemic.
- **Negative** and **positive impacts / opportunities** identified
- Focus on the impacts on the **social determinants of health, population groups** affected and **inequalities**
- **Evidence based: Literature review; interviews, 2 stakeholder workshops; case studies**
- **Strategic Advisory Group** established including Welsh Government, public bodies; environmental agencies; academia
- **Publication** –July 18th 2023 [Health Impact Assessment highlights urgent need to protect health and wellbeing as the climate changes - Public Health Wales \(nhs.wales\)](#)

Methodology

HIA Process

1. Screening
2. Scoping
3. Appraisal of three types evidence: Population, published, qualitative
4. Report and recommendations
5. Review and reflection including monitoring and evaluation

Main Findings

All of the Social Determinants of Health are affected

Food Security and Nutrition Behaviours affecting health

- Alcohol and substance misuse
- Physical and outdoor activity

Social and community factors

- Community resilience
- Population Displacement, mobility and migration

Mental health and wellbeing

Economic conditions

- Working conditions
- Economic development and skills

Access and quality of services

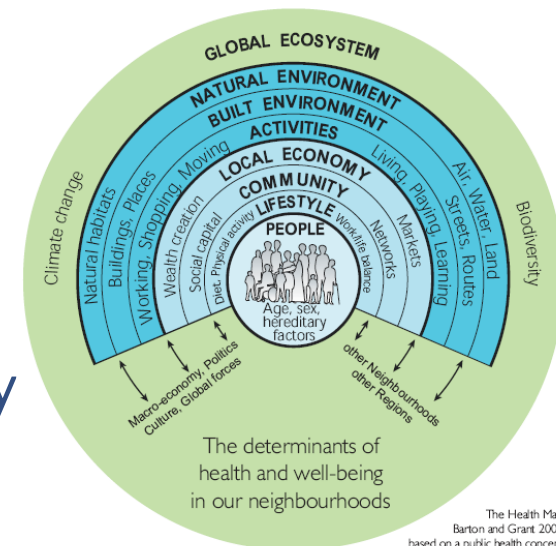
- Health and social care services quality and access
- Education and skills

Living environment

- Housing
- Landslides and coal tips
- Water quality and supply
- Air quality
- Wildfires
- Flooding
- Heat
- Vector borne disease
- Biodiversity and Green infrastructure

Macro-economic, policy and sustainability

- Infrastructure
- Sustainable development
- Transport / active travel



The determinants of health and well-being in our neighbourhoods

The Health Map
Barton and Grant 2006
based on a public health concept
by Whitehead and Dahlgren, The Lancet 1991



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES

Iechyd Cyhoeddus
Cymru
Public Health
Wales

Population Groups affected – important to consider cumulative impacts and intersectionality

- Whole population
- Babies, children and young people
- Older adults
- Pregnant women
- People with disabilities and Long-term Conditions
- Low-income groups
- Occupational groups: outdoor workers; manufacturing; health/emergency services, transport
- Geographical areas: rural communities/coastal/urban/coastal/flood risk areas/ former industrial/mining areas
- Homeless people
- People who are displaced and refugees and asylum seekers
- People who are new to an area – students, recently arrived nationals, refugee and asylum seekers – areas with temporary populations

Other findings in the HIA: Key contextual factors that influence health and wellbeing

- Democracy, decision making and community engagement
- Psychosocial and behavioural factors
- Social media and communications (incl. risk communication)
- Sustainable development and decarbonisation



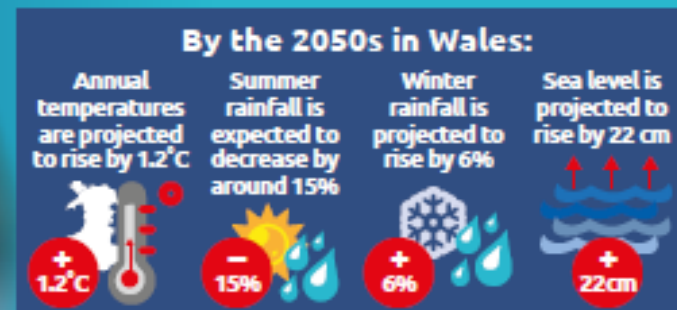
Key learning points:

- Good governance
- Building relationships and trust
- Recognising mental health impacts
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities
- Communications
- Effective engagement

Health and wellbeing impacts of climate change

Climate change means that extreme weather, flooding and heatwave events are likely to occur more often in Wales

Climate change affects all parts of Wales. Some examples of health impacts for specific groups are shown below



Climate change is happening in Wales

Climate change affects us all

Children and young people

- Extreme weather and flooding**
 - Disruption to education, outdoor sport and play
 - Displacement from their homes, friends and community
 - Stress and anxiety for themselves and their families
- Mental wellbeing**
 - Anxiety about how climate change will impact their future
- Air quality**
 - More susceptible to poor air quality and wildfire smoke
- Increased heat**
 - Higher risk of heat related illness
- Positives**
 - Have a positive role in reducing carbon emissions and adaptation to climate change
 - Can be positive agents of change
 - Practical and creative ideas to help communities recover from disasters

Older adults

- Extreme weather and flooding**
 - Disruption to access to health, social care and support services
 - Displacement from their home and support networks
 - More vulnerable in emergency situations such as flooding
 - Increase in mental distress
- Increased heat**
 - Higher risk of heat related illness and mortality
 - Social isolation may increase during heat waves
- Air quality**
 - Older adults are more susceptible to poor air quality and wildfire smoke
- Positives**
 - Warmer winters are projected to decrease cold related deaths

People on low income

- Extreme weather and flooding**
 - Less resources to prepare, respond and recover from floods or other extreme weather
 - Less likely to be fully insured
- Air quality**
 - Air pollutant concentrations are currently higher in areas of socioeconomic disadvantage
- Food and nutrition**
 - Potential for increase in food costs
- Positives**
 - Potential in the long term for reduced heating costs

People with disabilities and long-term health conditions

- Extreme weather and flooding**
 - Disruption to access to health, social care and support services
 - Increase in mental distress
 - More vulnerable in emergency situations such as flooding
- Increased heat**
 - Negative impacts on some conditions such as mental health problems, cardiovascular and respiratory disease, and diabetes
 - Some medications can increase vulnerability to heat related illness
 - Social isolation
 - Sleep disturbance
- Air quality**
 - Those with respiratory conditions are more susceptible to poor air quality and wildfire smoke

Planning and preparing for climate change needs to include action across sectors to promote and protect the health and wellbeing of different population groups and places in Wales.



Key messages

- Our **health and wellbeing is dependent on the health of the planet** and its ecosystems
- Tackling **climate change by reducing emissions has major co-benefits** for health
- **Public participation and involvement in policy and planning** for the future **needs to be strengthened**
- **More action is urgently needed across Wales to adapt** the environments in which people live, work, play and learn to protect health and wellbeing
- Action on **adaptation needs to go beyond responses to individual episodes of extreme weather** - long-term, preventative solutions are needed
- **Adaptation policy and decisions in other sectors will impact health outcomes.** Health, wellbeing and equity need to be outcomes of adaptation policy across sectors

Impact and influence

- Welsh Government adaptation
- Climate Change Risk Assessment 4 in UK
- Public Health Wales strategic Priority
- Wales Environment agency – recommending assessment at a local level
- Replicated by other nations





**Thank you for listening.
Any questions?**