Consultation Response: Just Transition to Net Zero Wales: Call for Evidence

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About the Faculty of Public Health

The Faculty of Public Health (FPH) is a membership organisation for nearly 4,000 public health professionals across the UK and around the world. Our role is to improve the health and wellbeing of local communities and national populations.

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.

The FPH Climate and Health Committee is responsible for leading the Faculty's response on issues of sustainability, climate change and biodiversity loss in public health and formulate and approve relevant policy. Committee representation also incorporates members from Wales, who work closely with the Committee of FPH in Wales.

Response

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 local, national and global levels - but also because adaptation and mitigation strategies have many health co-benefits. 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 heart of policy.

This principles outlined in this consultation have many areas of alignment with the FPH Climate and Health Strategy published in 2021,[1] which sets out the FPH vision for climate and health as follows:

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[1] fph-climate-health-strategy-final.pdf

- Better health for all – leaving no one behind, now and for future generations
- The Faculty of Public Health becomes a credible and respected voice on climate, environment and health impacts, and supports the public health workforce to lead on strategies to protect health and wellbeing for current and future generations.

As the professional membership body for public health, we have committed to promote and protect health for everyone and will:

- Ensure that the public health workforce has the knowledge, skills and capability to work on mitigation and adaptation to the climate emergency and environmental breakdown, including access to resources and the confidence to make the case for the health co-benefits of action on climate change
- Advocate for inequalities to be essential to all work on climate, the environment and health, recognising that climate injustice creates health inequalities locally and globally
- Demonstrate leadership by becoming a net-zero organisation.

Equity and justice are central issues in responding to the climate and health emergency. Both within and between countries, those experiencing the greatest impacts from climate change are often those that have contributed the least towards global greenhouse gas emissions.[2] In Wales and around the UK, extreme weather events have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups such as older people, people with lower income and marginalised groups, who may live in areas with more pollution, less green space and more prone to flooding, whilst those in privately-rented homes are often more vulnerable than owner-occupiers as they may be less able to prepare for and recover from climate events.[3] Mitigation and adaptation strategies can also themselves lead to inequities if not carefully planned and implemented.[4]

As referenced in Professor Sir Michael Marmot's 2020 review, *'The twin problems of social inequalities and climate change have to be tackled at the same time. Addressing each is vital to creating a society that is just, and sustainable for the current and future generations.'* [5]

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.

As a global public health issue it is important to recognise the value in sharing skills and experience from countries around the world, learning where things have gone well and where lessons could be learned for Wales. The FPH is a founding member of the UK

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[2] Climate Change and Global Health: Quantifying a Growing Ethical Crisis | SpringerLink
[3] Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On - The Health Foundation
[4] Sustainable health equity: achieving a net-zero UK (thelancet.com)
[5] Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On - The Health Foundation

Health Alliance on Climate Change (UKHACC),[6] an alliance of UK-based health organisations representing around 1 million health professionals and focused on coordinating action, providing leadership, and amplifying the voice of health professionals across the UK. UKHACC is also a member of the Global Climate and Health Alliance (GCHA),[7] which engages and guides health professionals and health workers around the world to drive the transformational change needed to address the climate emergency. The FPH works in partnership with these organisations and help to facilitate this shared learning from countries that have experience of developing policies around just transition, such as New Zealand[8] and Canada,[9] [10] [11] [12]. GCHA also published a briefing in 2022 which explored the health harms of fossil fuel dependence and the case for a just phase-out.[13]

The case for addressing this gap at pace is further strengthened by the many health co-benefits of action, which can be realised through both mitigation and adaptation[14] [15] if an inter-disciplinary, whole-system approach is adopted. Strategies such as decarbonising our energy system and switching to renewable energy, promoting active travel, more sustainable diets and climate-resilient housing adaptations will lead to a number of direct and indirect benefits to physical and mental health, including through improved air quality, higher levels of physical activity and fewer cold and heat-related illnesses and deaths.[16] [17] The public already recognises this opportunity: in a 2020 survey of the UK public, not only did 75% of respondents either strongly or somewhat support the net-zero target, but over 75% of respondents believed there would be better health in a future where net-zero is reached.[18] As part of this it is important to ensure meaningful engagement with communities as part of the just transition.

[6] https://ukhealthalliance.org/
[7] https://climateandhealthalliance.org/
[8] https://www.mbie.govt.nz/business-and-employment/economic-development/just-transition/
[9] https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/oil-gas-and-coal/eu-coal-regions/knowledge-products/task-force-just-transition-canadian-coal-power-workers-and-communities_en#:~:text=Task%20force%20on%20just%20transition%20for%20Canadian%20coal%20power%20workers%20and%20communities,-Categories%3A%20Case%20study&text=In%202016%2C%20the%20Canadian%20government,terms%20of%20CO2)%20by%202030
[10] https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/oil-gas-and-coal/eu-coal-regions/knowledge-products/task-force-just-transition-canadian-coal-power-workers-and-communities_en#:~:text=Task%20force%20on%20just%20transition%20for%20Canadian%20coal%20power%20workers%20and%20communities,-Categories%3A%20Case%20study&text=In%202016%2C%20the%20Canadian%20government,terms%20of%20CO2)%20by%202030
[11] https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/climate-change/task-force-just-transition/final-report.html
[12] https://www.canada.ca/en/services/jobs/training/initiatives/sustainable-jobs/plan.html#s3
[13] https://climateandhealthalliance.org/initiatives/fossil-fuel-phaseout/
[14] Mitigation: decreasing the amount of emissions released into the atmosphere and in reducing the current concentration of carbon dioxide (CO_2) by enhancing sinks (e.g. increasing the area of forests) Source: UNFCCC https://unfccc.int/topics/mitigation/the-big-picture/introduction-to-mitigation
[15] Adaptation: changes in processes, practices, and structures to moderate potential damages or to benefit from opportunities associated with climate change Source: UNFCCC https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/thebig-picture/what-do-adaptation-to-climate-change-and-climate-resilience-mean
[16] Health benefits of policies to reduce carbon emissions | The BMJ
[17] Health and climate: Co-benefits | The BMJ
[18] Climate change and net zero public awareness and perceptions summary report (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Examples of approaches include the use of behavioural science as a tool when responding to the climate crisis,[19] as well as the use of deliberative public engagement in climate policy development.[20]

This emergency must be tackled alongside other current and emerging threats. COVID-19 has reminded us that we cannot tackle global health threats in isolation. A number of other health threats are also driven by how humans interact with animals, nature and the environment, including the inter-related issues of antimicrobial resistance, emerging infectious diseases and the biodiversity crisis. 'One Health' and 'Planetary Health' approaches are key to ensuring that this complexity is taken into account in our responses to these interlinked crises.[21] Key related global policy frameworks including the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction provide a foundation for a sustainable, low-carbon and resilient approach to development.[22]

The multidisciplinary nature of public health enables an appreciation of the evidence and ways of working across multiple disciplines, including systems leadership, behavioural and communication science, and ethics. In the words of Sir Andy Haines, there are *'special opportunities and responsibilities for health practitioners to lead, facilitate, influence and act' on climate change'*.[23] The Faculty and its membership are positioned to contribute in all of these ways, such as to strengthen climate and environmental knowledge and skills across the public health workforce, and to lead on climate-aware policy development and advocacy within the UK, and for itself to become a more sustainable organisation that takes climate change into account in everything it does. The issues that need to be addressed in relation to climate change and sustainable development include energy, water, transport and travel, housing, spatial development, food, waste, as well as issues of the economy, environment, nature and biodiversity. All of these topics are key issues for public health. The public health workforce is a key asset in our response to the climate emergency. Delivering an effective, evidence-based and just response will require the full diversity of expertise and disciplines, across all functions of the public health system, including:

• Health Protection
• Health Improvement
• Health Services
• Public Health Intelligence
• Academic Public Health
• Workforce Development

Public health has been at the heart of the COVID-19 response, and it now needs to be at the heart of the response to the climate crisis, working with partners to raise the importance of the health implications and co benefits to health of addressing climate change. But the Faculty is not a lone actor. Many organisations and academic institutes

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[19] https://phwwhocc.co.uk/resources/responding-to-the-climate-crisis-applying-behavioural-science/
[20] https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/The-role-of-deliberative-public-engagement-in-climate-policy-development-University-of-Lancaster.pdf
[21] Climate Change and Health (who.int)
[22] Action on Climate and SDGs | UNFCCC
[23] Griffiths J, Rao M, Adshead F, Thorpe A (Eds). The Health Practitioner's Guide to Climate Change. London: Earthscan; 2009

are working on the intersection between climate and health locally, nationally, and globally and our identified priorities should complement and add value across the system. This includes sharing and extending existing good practice, particularly across and between the four nations.

Supporting information

FPH Climate and Health Committee Climate and Health Committee - FPH
FPH Climate and Health Strategy 2021-25 fph-climate-health-strategy-final.pdf
FPH Policy Briefing: Health Security- the climate and ecological crisis health-security-the-climate-and-ecological-crisis.pdf (fph.org.uk)