

# Sustainable health and social care: a briefing for commissioners and health and wellbeing boards



The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) was established by Government in 2001 to improve social care services for adults and children in the United Kingdom.

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SCIE works to:

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- enhance the skills and professionalism of social care workers through our tailored, targeted and user-friendly resources.

# Sustainable health and social care: a briefing for commissioners and health and wellbeing boards

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The Sustainable Social Care programme encourages commissioners of adult social care to promote sustainable development across the sector, particularly to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to climate change. For further information about the programme and related resources, please visit

[www.scie.org.uk/adults/sustainablesocialcare/index.asp](http://www.scie.org.uk/adults/sustainablesocialcare/index.asp)

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## Acknowledgements and further information

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For further information about the Sustainable Social Care programme, including publications and resources, visit [www.scie.org.uk/adults/sustainable-social-care](http://www.scie.org.uk/adults/sustainable-social-care) or email [sustainability@scie.org.uk](mailto:sustainability@scie.org.uk).

## Why ‘sustainable health and social care’?

Sustainable development is about balancing social, economic and environmental considerations, meeting the needs of people now and in the future.

The **Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012** place new obligations on commissioners. It requires public authorities ‘to have regard to economic, social and environmental wellbeing in connection with public services contracts; and for connected purposes’.

*‘The Coalition Government is committed to sustainable development (SD). This means making the necessary decisions now to realise our vision of stimulating economic growth and tackling the deficit, maximising wellbeing and protecting our environment, without negatively impacting on the ability of future generations to do the same.’ (‘Mainstreaming sustainable development: the government’s vision and what this means in practice’ (DEFRA 2011)).*

A sustainable development approach to health and social care is effective in:

- improving the quality of life of people who use services
- reducing health inequalities
- protecting those in vulnerable circumstances
- improving the resilience of individuals, communities and services
- engaging citizens in creative discussion about the future of care
- saving money, increasing efficiency and reducing waste
- managing risk
- enhancing the reputation of councils and clinical commissioning groups as local leaders
- meeting regulatory requirements.

*‘Quality of life and quality of care go hand in hand. By mainstreaming sustainable development in social care, we will ensure that personalised services are also services which connect people to their communities and to the environment in which they live. We will strengthen the capacity of local providers to offer care that is both responsive to individuals’ present needs and resilient over the longer term, particularly to the effects of climate change.’ (Paul Burstow MP, Minister of State for Care Services)*

Sustainability supports a range of policies and features of the newly emerging health and social care landscape as well as environmental policies and legislation. These include:

- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNAs) and health and wellbeing strategies
- integration of health and social care
- personalisation and the Think Local Act Personal agenda
- enhanced role for local authorities in public health and the outcomes framework (prevention, improvement and protection)
- UK Climate Change Act (2008) duties to both mitigate and adapt to climate change
- requirements on health and social care commissioners to show they have considered the impact of social and environmental factors in their commissioning and procurement, and not just price.

## The role of health and wellbeing boards and commissioners

*'The strengthened role of local authorities in improving health, through public health and commissioning, is a real opportunity for clinicians to work with councillors and officers to realise the co-benefits for health and the environment of action on climate change.'* (Dr Robin Stott and Professor Sue Atkinson CBE, Co-chairs of the Climate and Health Council)

Research shows that political engagement and organisational leadership are significant enablers of sustainability in social care. Health and wellbeing boards and their constituent members have an especially important role to play as leaders in their local communities.

There is also a role for people who use services as environmental leaders in driving change and stimulating the market for more sustainable care services.

A sustainable development approach supports the role of local authorities in promoting health as a function 'conferred on local authorities as a whole' as set out in '**Liberating the NHS: legislative framework and next steps**' (DH 2010).

A Sustainable Development Management Plan is an indicator of health protection preparedness for all public authorities, as set out in '**Improving outcomes and supporting transparency: Part 1 A public health outcomes framework for England 2013–16**' (DH 2012).

It will be a pre-authorisation requirement for clinical commissioning groups that they commit to promoting environmental sustainability 'through their actions as a corporate body as well as a commissioner'.



Therefore, health and wellbeing boards and their constituent members can and should work collectively and individually to promote sustainable health and social care in the way that they structure their business and integrate the design and delivery of services.

*'The message from leaders should be "do as I do" so you show sustainability can be done.'* (Lisa Rodrigues, Chief Executive, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust)

### **Coventry City Council's health and wellbeing board**

Coventry's health and wellbeing board decided to include in its membership identified leads for each of the six themes in the **Marmot Review**, including 'creating and developing healthy and sustainable places and communities'. This reflects the council's commitment to an approach which integrates social, economic and environmental determinants of health and wellbeing.

## Climate change: the threat to people and services

A sustainable development approach to health and social care will consider environmental issues alongside social and economic issues, including the threat posed by climate change to people who use or provide services.

*'The ability of individuals, households and communities to adapt and recover from a sudden disruption to their way of life caused by climate-induced weather events is dependent on a number of factors. These include access to services (e.g. transport, communication, social support and emergency relief) and whether they have the necessary knowledge, physical and financial capital and social networks to support their recovery.'* (Dr Gary Haq, Stockholm Environment Institute at the University of York, What are the social impacts of climate change in the UK?

**Joseph Rowntree Foundation climate change micro-site)**

In the UK, the most immediate and dramatic evidence of climate change is in the increased incidence of severe weather events such as heatwaves and flooding. These events, in turn, have the greatest impact on people in vulnerable circumstances and who may be users of care services, and can exacerbate health inequalities.

For example, the August 2003 heatwave was associated with a large, short-term increase in mortality. Overall, there were 16 per cent excess deaths in England and Wales. Worst affected were people over the age of 75 years. The impact was greatest in London where deaths in those over the age of 75 increased by 59 per cent.

The wider health effects of climate change are documented in the Department of Health/Health Protection Agency's '**Health effects of climate change in the UK 2008**' and include:

- heat and cold stress
- morbidity and mortality from air pollution

- morbidity and mortality from weather disasters
- vector-borne diseases
- food and water-borne diseases
- cataracts, skin burns and skin cancers.

**Birmingham's Climate Change Adaptation Partnership** is focusing its work on the needs of the city's most vulnerable communities as they are most likely to be affected. This includes:

- GIS map risk/vulnerability mapping to help prioritise adaptation
- sector-specific risk and vulnerability assessment
- community engagement and projects to build community resilience
- River Cole Surface Water Management Plan for catchment area which has suffered significant flooding in the recent past
- green infrastructure assessment
- practical projects such as the Washwood Heath brook clearance to prepare areas worst affected by flooding.

## Climate change: the opportunity for people and services

*'Building resilience in people's lives and their experiences of community is now key to modern social care. It's also the key to adapting to uncertainty such as climate change, and makes this work topical and timely.'*

(Peter Hay, Strategic Director, Adults and Communities, Birmingham City Council, and President of the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services 2011–12)

There is a growing body of literature demonstrating the co-benefits to health, wellbeing and the environment of actions to mitigate but also adapt to climate change. For example, 'Managing the health effects of climate change', part of the **Lancet Health and Climate Change Series** published in 2009.

Improving household energy efficiency can have net benefits for health and wellbeing through improved indoor temperatures and air quality, as well as helping to address fuel poverty.

Meeting targets to reduce greenhouse gases will require more walking and cycling and less motor vehicle use, bringing substantial health benefits from reduced cardiovascular disease, depression, diabetes and dementia.

Designing health and care buildings with green spaces provides healing views, assists in cooling and flood run-off, and increases energy efficiency.

‘**Saving carbon, improving health: NHS carbon reduction strategy for England**’ (2009) and the ‘**Update**’ (2010) set carbon reduction targets for the NHS in line with the Climate Change Act and demonstrate the contribution of action across energy use, procurement and food, transport, water, waste, designing the built environment, organisational development, partnerships, governance and finance.

SCIE’s At a glance 23 **Sustainable social care: climate change** summarises the key issues and provides links to useful resources.

## Improving health and reducing health inequalities

The public health white paper ‘**Health lives, healthy people**’ sets out how health and wellbeing strategies based on Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) will provide the local framework for commissioning of healthcare, social care and public health, taking into account wider ranging interventions across the life course as well as preventative measures to keep people active and independent in the community. This explicitly complements ‘**A vision for adult social care**’.

Citing the Marmot Review, the white paper recognises that climate change is one of the biggest public health threats of the century with the potential to increase health inequalities. It sets out some actions to tackle climate change and provide health benefits at the same time:

- Active travel to deliver low-cost health improvements and reduce emissions.
- Green spaces to improve mental health and the quality of community life, and offer some protection from the expected increase in heatwaves and flooding.
- Spatial planning to promote local ownership and occupation of public spaces.
- Behaviour change to embed new ways of sustainable living and working.
- Community projects to harness renewable energy and mitigate the effects of climate change.

The NHS **Good Corporate Citizen** model provides a self-assessment tool plus guidance, case studies and other practical resources for NHS and partner organisations to improve their understanding and delivery of sustainable healthcare.

SCIE’s At a glance 28 **Sustainable social care: the natural environment** summarises the key issues regarding the health benefits of access to nature, and provides links to useful resources.

## Integration

*'... developing more integrated forms of care, and removing duplication and redundancy from care pathways all have the potential to reduce environmental impacts while improving patient experience and outcomes.'*  
(Chris Naylor and John Appleby, '**Sustainable health and social care: connecting environmental and financial performance**', King's Fund 2012))

Current health and social care planning is driven by demographic change, the growing prevalence of long-term and complex conditions, and ever tightening budgets.

Patients' and service users' expectations are changing. Dissatisfaction is increasing with fragmented and uncoordinated care across the NHS and social services.

An integrated approach to health and social care will be socially, economically and environmentally sustainable as a result of reduced duplication and hence less waste of resources, as well as improved patient and service user experience (which itself can accelerate recovery).

## Achieving more and better with less

*'There are close conceptual connections between sustainability and other system goals - notably productivity, prevention and integration - and if the right approach is taken, there are opportunities to serve multiple objectives simultaneously.'* (Chris Naylor and John Appleby, '**Sustainable health and social care: connecting environmental and financial performance**' (King's Fund 2012))

Energy efficiency and waste reduction support quality improvements, innovation and productivity as well as preventing ill health – the **QIPP** agenda in the NHS and the principles underpinning '**A vision for adult social care**' (DH, 2010).

Increasing energy efficiency and reducing overall energy consumption can have significant and long-term financial benefits, for organisations, households and individuals. In their submission to the recent Hills Fuel Poverty Review '**Getting the measure of fuel poverty**', the Local Government Association brought together evidence of success in aligning social, economic and environmental objectives to address poor quality housing, high energy costs and the consequences for health inequalities. The submission was published as '**Warm and healthy homes: how councils are helping householders improve the energy efficiency of their homes**'.

### **£100, 000 p.a. saved by Bristol City Council through energy saving measures**

By implementing energy savings measures, Bristol's Health and Social Care Directorate reduced its expenditure by c. 20 per cent between 2005 and 2009, a saving of c. £100,000 per year. These measures are linked to internal processes, business mileage and vehicle use, to commissioning and provider performance, and to community capacity building. By installing energy saving systems in social care buildings across the city, the service has saved £30,000 a year on electricity bills alone.

Genuine involvement of community groups and third sector organisations in the design and delivery of mainstream services, through co-production, can unlock social, economic and environmental benefits. The development of local enterprises, drawing on community insight and assets, and located close to communities themselves, stimulates innovation and community capacity-building with associated efficiencies.

**£65,000 p.a. saved in Newham through community-based provision**

Newham PCT worked with locally-based and culturally competent voluntary sector organisations to host Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) practitioners within the community. As a result, almost £65,000 in additional estate costs were saved. The dispersed location of therapy support also reduced patient miles, as well as providing opportunities for community capacity-building.

## Community and personalisation

*'The generations coming into social care now are going to be more environmentally aware so it is about accepting people as individuals and helping them to take control and continue to be self-sufficient if they want to be.'* (Service manager Gill Scott, quoted in '**Making adult social care greener**', Community Care 8 April 2011)

Approaches which combine personalisation and environmental sustainability can have broader social and economic benefits. For example, community-based models of personalised care e.g. co-production and time-banking, stimulate local economic development and strengthen community capacity.

A sustainable development approach is also a useful way to engage people in planning and designing the future of care, beyond the constraints of traditional consultation about service changes. It allows commissioners to explore with citizens their experiences of where they live, the quality of the environment around them, the places and activities they enjoy, how they get around, what they like and what they would like to see improved. This often leads to simple and low-cost solutions which promote independent living and care which is community-based, of which one example is Greater Bedminster Older People's Forum's **Toilets and Benches Map**.

**'Sustainable social care and personalisation: a guide for community engagement'** helps commissioners and providers of adult social care, as well as community groups, to engage with citizens to develop responsive, personalised and environmentally sustainable services.

The guide was developed as part of SCIE's **Sustainable Social Care programme** and is based on action research in Bristol. It uses a sustainable development framework to shape discussions about the future of care.

## Leadership and reputation

*'The role of leaders and senior managers is clearly a key factor in creating the right conditions for sustainability initiatives to succeed.'* (Evans, Hills and Grimshaw, '**Sustainable systems of social care**' (SCIE, 2010))

Taking action against climate change helps set an example and raise public profile. It also requires strong political and corporate leadership to drive change across the local health and social care system.

Under the Carbon Reduction Commitment energy Efficiency Scheme (see below), an organisation's success in achieving carbon reduction will be published and compared to others.

Almost nine out of ten NHS leaders surveyed by Rand Europe for the '**Sustainability in the NHS: Healthcheck 2012**' said they actively engage with sustainability and think it is important, with 60 per cent believing it is essential to the running of their organisation.

### **Go Low – Leading by example**

Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust with support from Bristol City Council set up Go Low, an innovative programme to reduce the amount of petrol used by community health teams. They have purchased low-emission cars and electric bikes and encouraged team members to use them.

The project helps improve air quality and therefore health by reducing the number of 'petro-miles' that staff do.

Service users are also benefiting from the project in unanticipated ways. Staff had become used to offering lifts to service users in their cars. But one of the striking aspects of arriving to home visits by bike is that staff can no longer do this. As a result, what was previously a dependent relationship is now one that 'is very different... staff are visibly demonstrating a message that promotes independence'.

This has encouraged some service users to start cycling too, or even to take up vocational training within the cycling industry. The Trust is working with Bristol Bike Project, a local voluntary organisation that teaches people to repair bicycles by refurbishing second-hand ones.

Go Low was so successful, it is now trading as a Community Interest Company.

## Risk management and business continuity

*'Many of the principles used in social care, such as risk assessment, harm reduction, resilience and the importance of early intervention, are equally useful when we think about the environment.'* (Bradshaw, Sillett and Walker, **'Independence, community and environment'** (SCIE, 2010)

Findings from SCIE's Sustainable Social Care programme suggest that climate change adaptation has particular resonance for the social care sector because of its focus on managing everyday risks, enabling independent living and valuing dignity.

**'Adaptation to climate change in NHS organisations: what you need to know'** (NHS SDU, 2010) is a brief guide which will be updated in 2012 to reflect the latest evidence and policy.

### **Hertfordshire County Council: climate change and risk management**

Hertfordshire County Council has embedded climate change risk into everyday service delivery, decision-making, policies, projects and planning. Its messages to other councils include:

- Avoid saying climate 'adaptation': 'climate risk' or 'business continuity' have far greater resonance to those outside the climate change agenda.
- Use meaningful language: responding to the impacts of climate change is a challenge for everyone, not just the 'eco-warriors' down the corridor.
- Make friends with your risk management team: your risk management team may get you further in six months than you've managed in the past year on your own.
- Tap into existing ways of working: use efficient, clever and innovative use of existing mechanisms rather than creating new processes and procedures that will only create work.
- Tailor your information to your audience: for example, adult care services will be more interested in future heatwaves and summer temperatures than increased rainfall.
- Always remember the costs of doing nothing far outweigh the costs of acting now: stress, however, that responding to climate risk now does not immediately involve capital investment.
- Stress the need for long-term planning. Politics may operate on a four-year cycle, but planning, policy, asset management decisions and financial investments operate over a much longer term. For example: Is that new community centre likely to withstand future weather extremes? Will the new countryside management policy be fit for purpose in 10 years time? How are planning decisions accounting for increased flood risk? Will the new buildings cost more in the long run because improved drainage systems have to be retro-fitted in five years time?

*Source: Local Government Improvement and Development*

## Environmental legislation, policy and guidance

The Climate Change Act (2008/amended 2009) set a legally binding target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 34 per cent by 2020 and 80 per cent by 2050 against a 1990 baseline. These targets are mirrored in '[Saving carbon, improving Health: NHS carbon reduction strategy for England \(2009\)](#)' and its 2010 update.

In January 2012, the Government published the first '[UK Climate Change Risk Assessment](#)' (CCRA), which is a five-yearly requirement of the Climate Change Act. The CCRA includes a report specific to the health sector. A national climate change adaptation plan is now in development.

The mandatory [Carbon Reduction Commitment Energy Efficiency Scheme \(CRC\)](#) features a range of reputational, behavioural and financial drivers which aim to encourage better energy management strategies. The CRC affects around 20,000 organisations including local authorities and larger NHS organisations.

Both the '[Heatwave plan for England](#)' and '[Cold weather plan for England](#)' (refreshed annually) provide guidance on the protection of people in vulnerable circumstances and highlight the increasing threat of climate change. These plans are supported by guidance from SCIE regarding e.g. nutrition and hydration in extreme heat, as part of the [Dignity in care](#) series.

## Further information

[SCIE's sustainability web pages](#) contain background information, research reports, case studies, At a glance briefings and links to further sources of information and guidance.

The NHS Sustainable Development Unit provides organisational development and support, guidance and tools in sustainable development and carbon reduction for the NHS. The unit also hosts the [Good Corporate Citizen](#) Assessment model.

The [Health Protection Agency](#) provides up-to-date information on the evidence base of the health effects of climate change and extreme weather events.

[UKCIP's](#) tools and guidance help organisations adapt the way they work to a changing climate, including temperature and precipitation [maps](#) and carbon emissions scenarios.

Local Government Improvement and Development brings together research, case studies and other resources to help local government re. [climate change, environmental sustainability and health](#)

The [Climate change and vulnerable people](#) project led by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) is helping to build the capacity of charities working with older and disabled people to adapt to climate change.



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## **Sustainable health and social care: a briefing for commissioners and health and wellbeing boards**

This briefing provides a summary guide for busy commissioners and health and wellbeing board members. It sets out the key policy and operational drivers for a sustainable development approach to health and social care design and delivery.

This includes specific detail regarding climate change and other environmental issues, but also covers social and economic sustainability. Short case studies of good practice at a local level illustrate the gains for health, efficiency, risk management, reputation and legislative compliance. There are links to further information and resources.

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