Glasgow Centre for Population Health

**Response to the Scottish Government's Climate Change
Adaptation Programme 2019 to 2024**

March 2019

Introduction

The Glasgow Centre for Population Health (GCPH) was established in 2004 to generate insights and evidence, support new approaches, and inform and influence action to improve health and tackle inequality. 'Sustainable, inclusive places' – one the centre's four work programmes – aims to support processes of change to help Glasgow become a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable city. Much of the work in this theme covers climate-related subjects, such as food production and consumption, active travel, air quality, greenspace and the influence of place on health.

Overall comments

The GCPH welcomes this opportunity to comment on the Climate Change Adaptation Programme for 2019 to 2024. We recognise the growing threat of climate change to population health and we understand the urgent need to respond through both mitigation and adaptation.

The alignment of this strategy with the UN Sustainable Development Goals is a positive approach, given the important global commitments within it to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and take immediate action on climate change. We also support the more proactive and strategic approach to adaptation taken here, which identifies the need to engage with new sectors and go beyond just identifying climate change risks. To support this, it might be helpful to include a section on the various sectors or disciplines that can contribute to climate adaptation. From the perspective of the GCPH, it would be helpful to include a section on the expected contribution of public health to the delivery of this strategy. It would also be helpful to make a clear distinction between the role of individuals, communities and the public, private and voluntary sector in supporting and delivering the strategy.

Climate change justice

A range of socioeconomic factors can shape people's experience of climatic events, including income, housing tenure, affordability of property insurance and how well connected they are to protective or supportive services. This means that climate change can intensify existing problems for vulnerable people, bringing the potential for certain health inequalities to increase[i]. Climate justice can be considered in terms of climate impacts, capacity to adapt, contribution to climate change and access to climate-related decision-making[ii].

Generally the most vulnerable populations and those with the fewest resources contribute the least to CO_2 emissions and are most at risk from the negative impacts of climate change.

Climate justice is an important and growing aspect of our work given the additional burden that climate change will bring to poverty, inequality and vulnerable population groups. Adaptation opportunities (e.g. sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDS), planting and other nature-based solutions) can be developed on vacant land, which tends to most concentrated in the most deprived urban areas. We would therefore like to see an emphasis on promoting nature-based adaptation solutions in these areas.

Last year the GCPH worked in partnership with Glasgow City Council, Sniffer and greenspace scotland to explore how people and organisations in North Glasgow could work together to become more resilient in the face of climate change. Weathering Change[iii] brought together individuals, voluntary organisations and statutory bodies to consider ways of adapting to climate change through place-based approaches. The project was based in an area of high socioeconomic deprivation and environmental challenges. Relevant key findings were:

Public attitudes and community responses to climate adaptation
- Staff from statutory and voluntary organisations with a role in climate adaptation highlighted a lack of public awareness around how to adapt to climate change through individual or community responses.
- There was limited public interest in climate adaptation unless people felt directly threatened by it (e.g. through flooding).
- Conversations with the public about climate change were most productive when linked to everyday life (e.g. recycling, food, fuel poverty, waste, travel).
- Addressing climate change was less of a priority than (perceived) more immediate issues like poverty, unemployment and access to opportunities.
- Several local groups were already doing environmental work/projects in the area. However, groups rarely worked together due to the competitive funding environment. Creating more opportunities for collaborative funding bids could help with this.

Ways of working to support climate adaptation
- The policy environment is favourable to the transfer of power and resources to local communities (e.g. the Community Empowerment Act and statutory policies); however this transfer has not yet occurred on the scale intended.

- Many climate adaptation activities are aligned with the priorities/activities of voluntary organisations (e.g. food growing, regeneration, supporting vulnerable people).
- Climate change adaptation can be introduced at a community level when it is broached in a way that considers how it could impact on amenities or resource that people value in their area (e.g. housing, community assets, parks, food options).
- Climate adaptation intersects with a number of agendas, requiring action through emergency planning, placemaking, regeneration and community development. Our research indicates that adaptation can be considered as part of a holistic approach to improving places and building community resilience.

Consultation questions

Q1. Do you agree with our outcome-based approach to adaptation in Scotland?

Yes, outcome-based approaches increase accountability for actions and can ensure that changes resulting from an intervention or policy are measured. However, the broad outcomes included here will need to be supported by a range of appropriate actions/policies, and consideration should be given to the potential for external factors to influence whether or not they are realised. For outcome 1: *'Our communities are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe in response to the changing climate'*, the policies included to support this outcome have the potential to be undermined by several external factors, including reduced public and third sector resources, the roll-out of Universal Credit, demographic changes or unexpected unemployment in some communities. These factors need to be identified and mitigated if communities are to become more empowered and resilient.

Further challenges relating to this outcome are:

- Reporting on the resilience of communities at a national level given the diversity of Scottish communities and the range of challenges that they face.
- Defining the terms used within the outcome (i.e. communities, inclusivity, empowerment and resilience).
- Identifying relevant policies to support the outcome; many of which may not have been created for the purpose of addressing climate adaptation.

Here, the resilience of Scottish communities may be defined by factors such as the availability of voluntary organisations, rates of volunteering, public participation in decision-

making, the demographic distribution of participation or public awareness of local climate action.

Q2. Do you agree that a National Forum on Adaptation should be established to facilitate discussion on climate change adaptation?

Yes, but it is important that this includes representation from a range of disciplines, including public health. It is also important that the public, voluntary and private sectors are appropriately represented.

Q3. Do you agree that climate change adaptation behaviours should be included in the Programme?

Yes, behaviours are important for highlighting the role that individuals, communities and organisations can play in adapting to climate change. This could build on the work of Adaptation Scotland[iv], which highlights the ways in which communities, businesses and the public sector can adapt to climate change, but could go further to include adaptation actions at an individual level. If behaviours are proposed for individuals or communities, we feel it is important that they are promoted in places that are more accessible than this strategy (e.g. public-friendly resources and through social media). In addition, desired behaviour changes will need to be aligned with actions to support them. This may involve financial incentives/disincentives and practical solutions that can be integrated into people's everyday lives.

The present draft includes some 'behaviours' that we do not feel are aimed at the right group. For outcome 2: '*The people in Scotland who are most vulnerable to climate change are able to adapt'*, the behaviours listed place onus on vulnerable people rather than those most able to implement plans, policies or actions that can protect vulnerable people from climate change. The proposed changes to behaviours currently listed for this outcome are relevant to the whole population, and it may be more appropriate to include a separate section with behaviours for 'individuals' instead.

At a local authority level, it would be helpful to include a set of 'behaviours' or 'considerations' that can be used to inform the various strategies where climate adaptation has relevance (e.g. land-use planning, transport, food, regeneration). This could be a short checklist of considerations that could be applied when a new strategy is being written. Integrating climate adaptation across various strategies is in keeping with Climate Ready Clyde[v], which identifies doing so across the region as an area where more action is needed.

In addition, many public bodies could take steps to promote sustainable practice through their own procurement policies (i.e. taking consideration of carbon footprint) and by promoting behaviour change within their own staff.

For outcome 7: '*Our international networks are adaptable to climate change',* the emphasis on food resilience – both in terms of imports and what we produce as a nation – is welcomed. It would also be useful to include recognition of the role that communities/third sector organisations can play in supporting food production in Scotland, particularly in cities where the benefits of food networks can be realised.

Q4. Do you agree that an integrated approach should be taken to monitoring and evaluation?

Our interpretation of an integrated approach to monitoring and evaluation is that it will include representation from all sectors involved in delivering the strategy and will draw evidence/learning from a range of sources, networks, policies and actions. One way to ensure this is to invite the groups, communities or organisations that are represented in the policies for each outcome. This will help to support community empowerment and ensure collective responsibility for the strategy.

Q5. Do you agree with our long-term vision for adapting to climate change in Scotland?

A more progressive vision could go beyond being 'adaptable' and 'ready' to include an emphasis on transformational change and recognition of the potential to harness benefits from climate change. Beyond this, Scotland could aspire to become a world leader in adapting to climate change. This would be in keeping with recent efforts to become a world leader in renewable energy production and expertise.

Q6. Does the Programme identify the right outcomes for Scotland over the next five years?

Specific comments on the outcomes that are relevant to public health are provided below:

Outcome 1: Our communities are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe in response to the changing climate

This outcome could be better defined and linked to a range of other policies. Community empowerment is an outcome that goes beyond the scope of climate change engagement

with community groups; it requires larger structural shifts in the way in which services are delivered and support is provided for people to participate in community life[vi]. Additionally, this outcome might be unrealistic in the face of a threat that is outwith the control of individuals or communities. A more realistic outcome, therefore, would be for communities to be playing an important role in adapting to climate change through locally appropriate responses.

Outcome 2: The people in Scotland who are most vulnerable to climate change are able to adapt and climate justice is embedded in climate change adaptation policy.

We feel that the responsibility for the delivery of this outcome should be placed on those able to protect vulnerable people, rather than those unfairly affected. Thus, the emphasis here could be on 'supporting people' rather than increasing their 'ability' to adapt. Shifting this emphasis here would take the responsibility away from vulnerable people towards those able to ensure that they are protected from the effects of climate change. It is also important to recognise that the responsibility for adaptation lies with everyone, and not just those at risk.

Sub-Outcome 2.2: Scotland's health and social care is ready and responding to changing demands as a result of the changing climate

This sub-outcome suggests that HSCPs should have sole responsibility for absorbing the effects of a changing climate from a public health perspective. While the HSCP have a key role to play, the broader public health community can contribute by supporting people directly, by shaping policy and practice, by contributing to the evidence base and by protecting people from the impacts of climate change. It could be argued that NHS Boards and Public Health departments should be encouraged to be more explicit and strategic in responding to climate change too. Recently NHS Lanarkshire included a chapter on climate change in their annual public health report[vii]. Encouraging other Health Board's to follow suit would be a positive development. Finally, public sector employers – including the NHS – should also be encouraged to consider their own carbon footprint and responsibility for adapting to climate change.

Outcome 3: Our inclusive and sustainable economy is flexible, adaptable and responsive to the changing climate

Despite describing the economy as 'inclusive', there is no mention of how economic opportunities from climate change will contribute to a more inclusive and fairer society. We would welcome recognition of the ways in which economic opportunities arising from climate change such as an increased focus on generating renewable energy, fuel efficient buildings, active sustainable travel innovation etc. can support the Scottish Government's Economic

Strategy, which promotes increasing competitiveness while simultaneously tackling inequality[viii].

Sub-Outcome 4.3: Scotland's other non-critical infrastructure is adaptable to climate change

This sub-outcome includes reference to active travel targets as a policy. This is an important aspect of mitigation, but we welcome the inclusion of active travel from an adaptation perspective. The predicted increase in active travel will need to be reflected in terms of increased resources for infrastructure and maintenance, as well as measures to ensure safety during bad weather. More extreme weather, including cold periods, will require active travel routes to be maintained and gritted.

Q7. Are there any additional policies that should be included in the outcomes set out in the following pages?

Community Planning is not mentioned in the strategy, but is an important structure to support the delivery of many of these outcomes. Further, there could be more emphasis on the role of housing in adapting to climate change, both in terms of retrofitting existing properties that are not well equipped to deal with weather changes (e.g. tenements), and through adaptive solutions for new developments. Further consideration could also be given to how adaptation is designed into land-use decisions and strategies. There is the potential that this may be achieved by considering climate adaptation more explicitly when using the Place Standard.

Outcome 1: Our communities are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe in response to the changing climate

This outcome is dependent on several policies that may not be specifically designed to support climate change adaptation. Given the emphasis on communities, an important policy development in this area is the Community Empowerment Act. It is also important that the third sector is represented in the policies/actions here, given their links to communities and involvement in environmental projects, food growing and ability to shape neighbourhood decision-making.

Outcome 2: The people in Scotland who are most vulnerable to climate change are able to adapt and climate justice is embedded in climate change adaptation policy.

This outcome requires an approach which identifies those most vulnerable and ensures that they are protected from the worst effects of climate change, both through preventative measures and support after climatic events. An important part of this outcome, we feel, is

that social isolation is tackled at a societal level to ensure that people know where to go for support within their community during any time of need.

References

[i] Paavola J. Health impacts of climate change and health and social inequalities in the UK, *Environmental Health* 2017;16(1):113.

[ii] Preston I, Banks N, Hargreaves K, Kazmierczak A, Lucas K, Mayne, R, Street, R. Climate change and social justice: *an evidence review*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation; 2014.

[iii] Yates G, McNeice V, Jones R, Wolstenholme R, Barrett F, Irving D. *Weathering Change: Community resilience in the face of climate change*. Glasgow: GCPH; 2018. Available at: https://www.gcph.co.uk/publications/762_weathering_change (accessed March 2019)

[iv] Adaptation Scotland. *How to adapt.* https://www.adaptationscotland.org.uk/how-adapt (accessed March 2019)

[v] Climate ready Clyde. *Climate Risk and Opportunity Assessment for Glasgow City Region*: *Key findings.* Edinburgh: Sniffer; 2018.

[vi] Scottish Government. *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act: summary.* Edinburgh: Scottish Government; 2017. Available at: https://www.gov.scot/publications/community-empowerment-scotland-act-summary/ (accessed March 2019)

[vii]. Department of Public Health. Public Health 2017/18: *The Annual Report of the Director of Public Health.* Bothwell: Lanarkshire NHS Board; 2019. Available at: https://www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk/download/public-health-2017-18/ (accessed April 2019).

[viii] Scottish Government. *Scotland's Economic Strategy.* Edinburgh: Scottish Government; 2015.