

CAVAN COUNTY COUNCIL

Health & Wellbeing and Climate Action



Cavan

Comhairle Contae an Chabháin
Cavan County Council

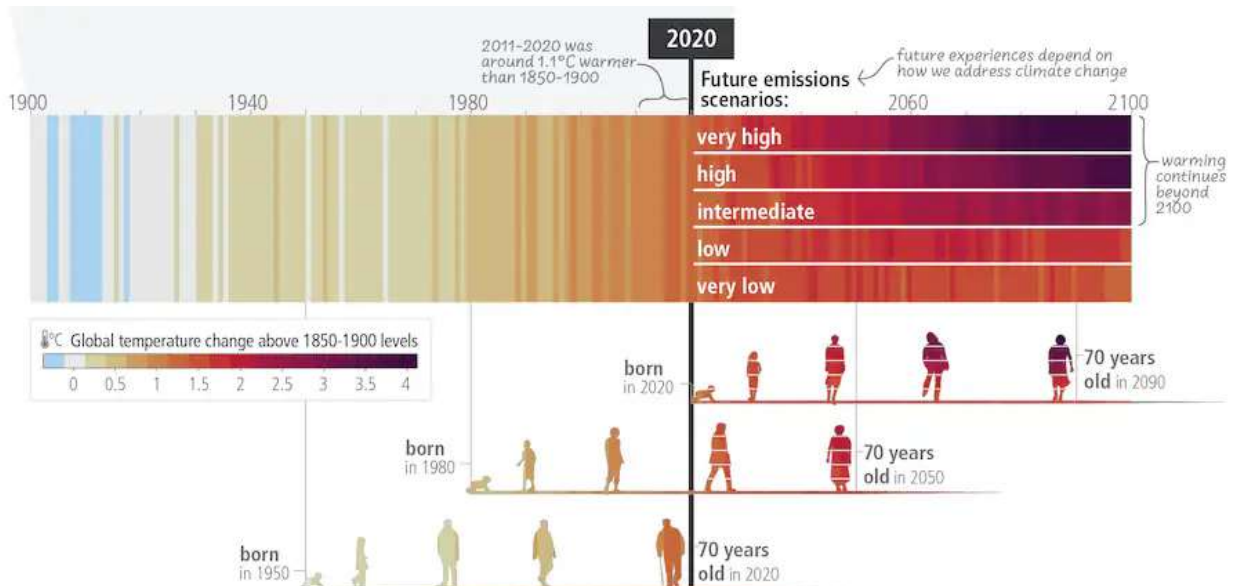
Local Authority Climate Action Plan
October 2023

Briefing Note for Local Authority Climate Action Plans

1.0 Climate Change and Health Impacts

Climate change is the single biggest health threat facing humanity. The impacts are already harming health through air pollution, disease, extreme weather events and related trauma, forced displacement, food insecurity, negative impacts on mental health and excess deaths. Whilst no one is safe from these risks, the people whose health is being harmed first and worst by the climate crisis, are the people who contribute least to its causes, and who are least able to protect themselves and their families against it - people in low-income and disadvantaged countries and communities. Whilst the health of the planet itself is under threat, the actions that we take in terms of climate adaptation, mitigation and biodiversity, can provide short to longer term human health benefits for all. The health co-benefits of taking climate action include active travel, healthy diet, cleaner air, home retrofitting and sustainable tourism.

Figure 1: Adverse impacts from human-caused climate change will continue to intensify



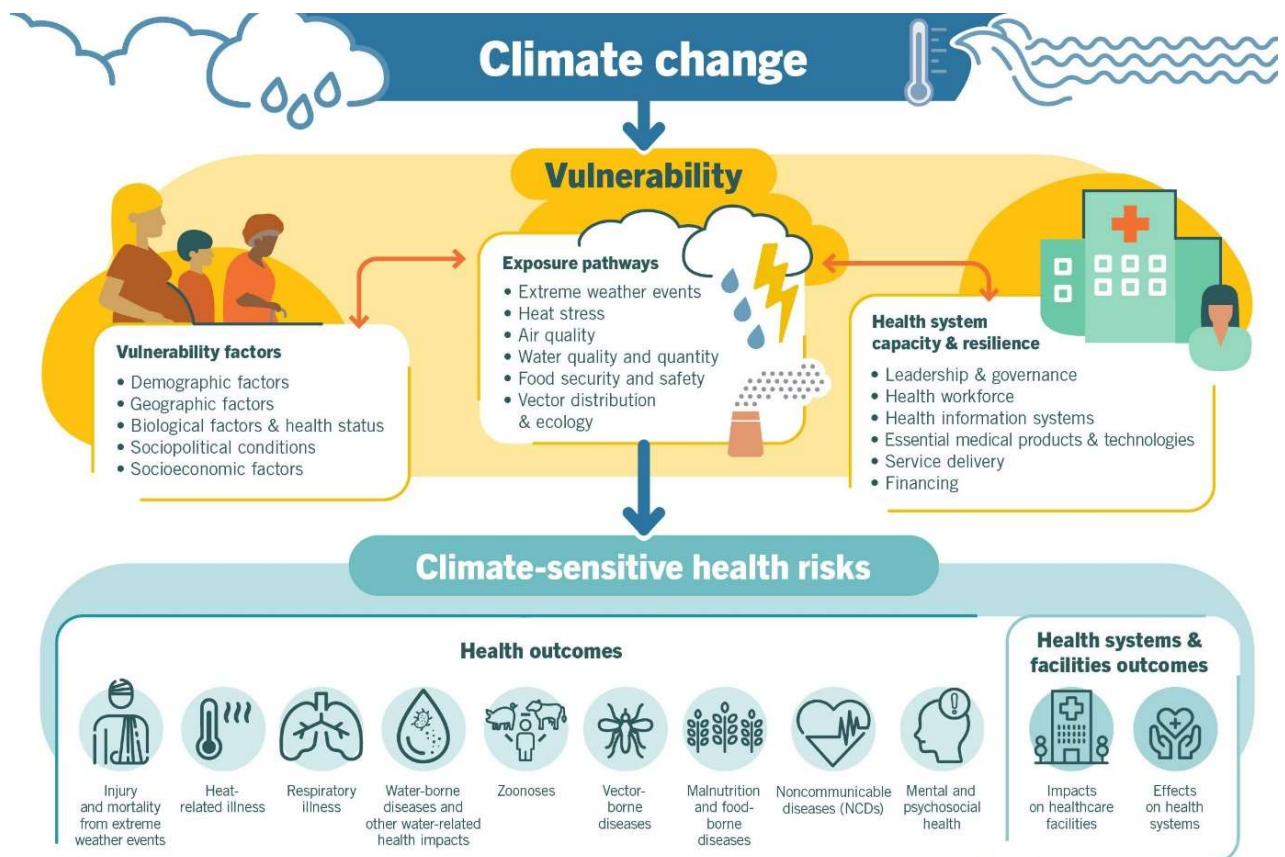
(Source: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, AR6 Synthesis Report)

Figure 1 shows how the climate has already changed and will change along the lifespan of three representative generations (born in 1950, 1980 and 2020). Future projections (2021–2100) of changes in global surface temperature are shown for the very low (SSP1-1.9), low (SSP1-2.6), intermediate (SSP2-4.5), high (SSP3-7.0) and very high (SSP5-8.5) GHG emissions scenarios. Changes in annual global surface temperatures are presented as ‘climate stripes’, with future projections showing the human-caused long-term trends and associated impact on representative generations.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) notes that the climate crisis threatens to undo the last fifty years of progress in development, global health, and poverty reduction, and to further widen existing health inequalities between and within populations. Figure 2 shows the climate-sensitive health risks as identified by the World Health Organisation. These climate-

sensitive health risks are disproportionately felt by the most vulnerable and disadvantaged, including children, ethnic minorities, lower-income communities, migrants or displaced persons, older populations, and those with underlying health conditions. In the short- to medium-term, the health impacts of climate change will be determined mainly by the vulnerability of populations, their resilience to the current rate of climate change and the extent and pace of adaptation. In the longer-term, the effects will increasingly depend on the extent to which transformational action is taken now to reduce emissions and avoid the breaching of dangerous temperature thresholds and potential irreversible tipping points.

Figure 2: Climate-sensitive Health Risks



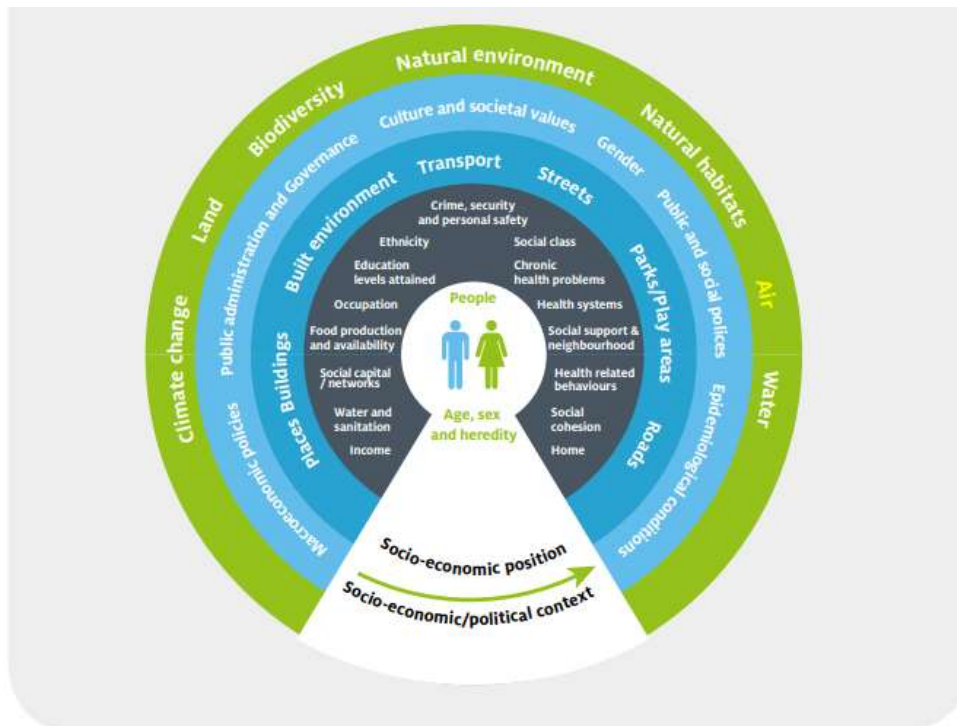
(Source: World Health Organisation)

2.0 Social Determinants of Health

Figure 3 shows the Social Determinants of Health, as included in *Healthy Ireland – A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025*. These Determinants are a range of factors that impact upon health and wellbeing. These include the circumstances in which people are born, grow up, live, work and age.

It can be noted that local authorities, in the various services that they provide, are linked to a range of these determinants, including Places and Buildings, Built Environment, Transport, Streets, Parks/Play Areas and Roads.

Figure 3: Social Determinants of Health



(Source: *Healthy Ireland – A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025*)

Healthy Ireland also states, 'As the determinants of health arise in all sectors of society and as all government sectors have responsibility for or can influence some or all of these determinants, it is imperative to involve a whole-of-government approach to recognise risk patterns and identify solutions, act through multiple levels, and share responsibility across policy fields and sectors'.

Working through the broad remit of the Local Authority Climate Action Plan, local authorities can play a significant role in capitalising on the opportunities and co-benefits that exist in delivering climate action through the promotion and support of health and well-being. Some direct overlaps between Healthy Ireland's Social Determinants for Health, Local Authority functions and Climate Action, are outlined below:

Local Authority Housing: Local Authorities continue to make progress in both the development of new homes and the energy upgrade and refurbishment of the existing social housing stock.

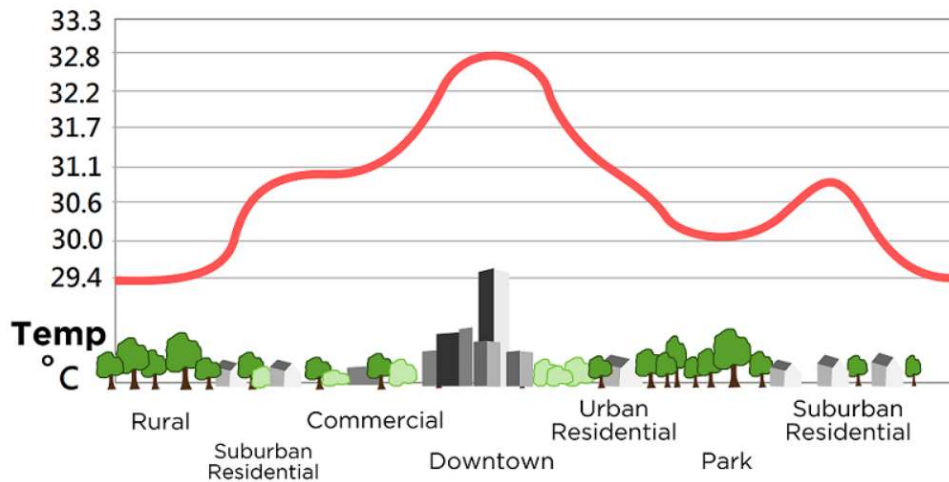
2022 was the second year of a 10-year Energy Efficiency Retrofit Programme, which is expected to grow each year to meet the Programme for Government retrofit commitment. Under this programme, local authorities are required to retrofit existing housing stock to a B2/Cost Optimal Building Energy Rating (BER). Homes retrofitted under this programme will benefit householders in many ways, they will be warmer, easier to heat and more comfortable homes. It will also enhance air quality in the home and for those currently using oil or gas, they will see savings on energy bills. Local Authorities also directly engage with social housing tenants on energy upgrades and environmental awareness, including Tenant Handbooks.

Active Travel - In the last two years, local authorities across the country have received significant funding from the National Transport Authority (NTA) for staff resources and project funding for Active Travel. Local authorities, in partnership with An Taisce Green Schools and the NTA are also implementing 'Safe Routes to Schools' across the country, to allow parents / guardians and children, to travel sustainably to school, prioritise walking, cycling and scooting to school, thereby removing the need to travel to school by private car. Learn more about the health benefits of Active Travel [HERE](#).

Parks and Open Spaces – Local Authorities continue to undertake nature based solution projects and initiatives that promote the importance of preserving and enhancing biodiversity, and promoting eco-systems services. Local authorities are also responsible for a variety of parks and open spaces, across their administrative areas, ensuring these are managed in a sustainable manner to ensure that future generations can enjoy the benefits of these amenities in terms of recreation, health and wellbeing. Parks, open spaces and other public realm projects are also important areas of reprieve, in combating the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect, in cities, towns and built-up areas, across the country.

“While urban areas will generally experience the same exposure to climate change as their surrounding regions, climate change poses particular risks for urban areas. This is as a result of the process of urbanisation, which results in changes in land use, land cover and land surface characteristics that subsequently modify the local climate, moisture exchanges and ecosystem services, promoting heat trapping and storage.” Further Information on the Urban Heat Island effect is available [HERE](#).

Figure 4: Profile of an Urban Heat Island



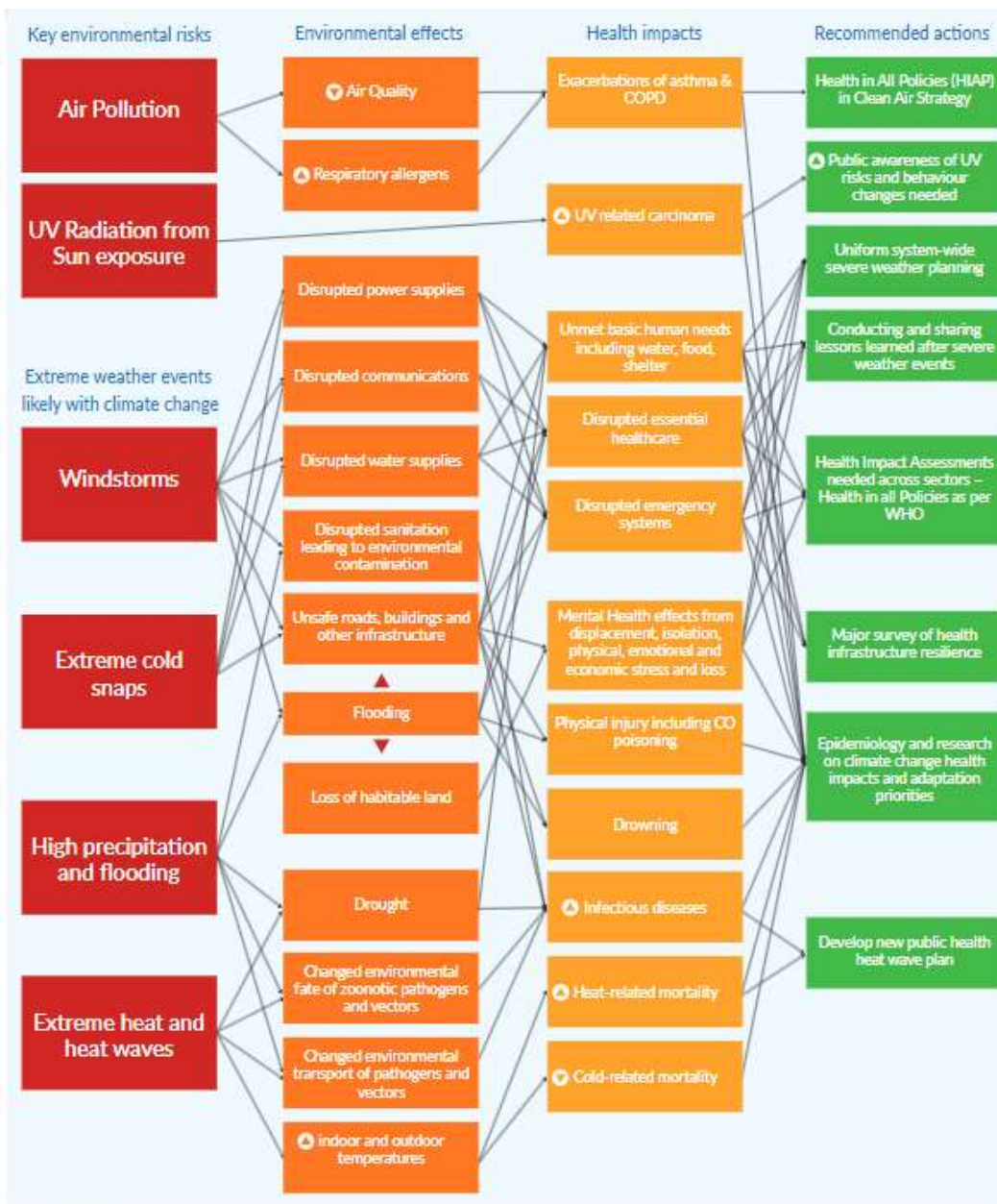
(Source: Copernicus: Europe’s Eyes on Earth)

3.0 Other Health Responses

Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the Health Sector (2019-2024)

This Plan was developed under the National Adaptation Framework (2018) and the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015. The Plan identifies the main climate change-related impacts and risks expected in the health sector in the coming years and identifies measures that can be taken to build resilience and to reduce sectoral vulnerabilities. Figure 5 shows the major predicted climate risks and health impacts, as outlined in the Sectoral Plan.

Figure 5: Major Predicted Climate Risks and Health Impacts



(Source: *Climate Change Adaptation Plan for the Health Sector 2019-2024*)

Air Quality

The EPA continually monitors air quality across Ireland and provides the Air Quality Index for Health (AQIH) and real-time results online at www.airquality.ie. Results are updated hourly, and people can log on at any time to check whether the current air quality is good, fair or poor.

The recently published National Clean Air Strategyⁱⁱⁱ states *“Many of the sources of air pollution are also sources of greenhouse gas emissions and there is a clear correlation between the actions required to lower air pollution and those needed to reduce carbon emissions and help in our fight against climate change”*.

Local authorities have a key role in monitoring and managing air quality through a network of Air quality monitors managed in partnership with the Environmental Protection Agency.

Whilst not a greenhouse gas, the exceedance of the EU limit value for nitrogen dioxide in the Dublin region in 2019 necessitated the preparation of the Dublin Region Air Quality Plan 2021. This air quality plan sets out 14 broad measures and a number of associated actions to address the exceedance of the nitrogen dioxide annual limit value.

Noise Pollution

Noise is a harmful pollutant and long term exposure to noise harms physical and mental health. The European Environment Agency has estimated that across Europe about 95 million people are exposed to harmful level of road traffic noise and that long term exposure to transport noise causes about 11,000 premature deaths and 40,000 new cases of ischemic heart disease. ^{iv}

The Environmental Noise Directive (END) requires local authorities to draw-up plans of action which will include measures to *'address priorities which may be identified by the exceeding of any relevant limit value or by other criteria chosen by the Member State and apply in particular to the most important areas as established by strategic noise mapping'*. In line with the strategic noise maps, this noise action plan is required to be reviewed and revised every 5 years, if required.

The four Dublin local authorities are currently preparing the Dublin Agglomeration Noise Action Plan 2024-2029. The range of Transport actions in the Draft Climate Action Plans, can also reduce noise pollution by way of increasing active travel infrastructure, prioritisation of public transport routes, improved public realm projects and green infrastructure such as parks, tree planting and other measures. The transition of vehicular fleet to lower emission vehicles, electric vehicles and other fuel sources from internal combustion (ICE) vehicles, will also reduce engine noise from many vehicles in an urban environment, where speed limits are restricted for safety reason. However, it is noted that research has shown that these noise benefits can be lost at higher speeds, due to tyre contact and aerodynamic noise from the vehicle.

There is also an opportunity for exploring climate co-benefits in the designation and development of 'Quiet Areas' across the four Dublin local authority areas. It is widely recognised that Quiet Areas in the urban context may include parks, areas within building blocks, courtyards, unused land or green areas.

4.0 Useful Links:

[Health Impacts of Climate Change and the Health Benefits of Climate Change Action: A Review of the Literature](#)

[Climate change adaptation in the health sector – a literature review](#)

[Zero regrets: scaling up action on climate change mitigation and adaptation for health in the WHO European Region](#)

<https://isglobalranking.org/city/dublin-metropolitan-area/dublin/#green>

<https://www.ourplace.scot/>

<https://healthyplanetconference.org/>

<https://www.who.int/activities/promoting-health-in-all-policies-and-intersectoral-action-capacities>

i

https://www.epa.ie/publications/research/climate-change/Research_Report_320.pdf

ii <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/75646/9e0dce8a-cebf-496a-aed4-fbe8c285183c.pdf#page=null>

iii <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/927e0-clean-air-strategy/#:~:text=The%20Clean%20Air%20Strategy%20provides,delivering%20on%20wider%20national%20objectives>.

iv <https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/topics/in-depth/noise>